

الراي العام

Take that! Major brushes aside old discords

News that the pop group Take That is to split has apparently prompted its distraught fan club to phone Downing Street. They need advice on how to paper over cracks and to reconcile belligerents. If anyone can hold a divided group together, they reason, it is John Major.

They are wise. The Prime Minister's first instinct in the Take That crisis will be to buy time to postpone the decision until 1997. Then he will promise a White Paper on the issues and hint at a possible referendum, but in ambiguous terms. If pressed, he will

set up an inquiry. He will see each member of Take That for a personal chat, one to one, authorising officials to talk separately to Mark, Jason, Gary and Howard: talk about talks. There may be hints (not from the PM himself, of course) about honours.

This column reckons Major's chance of success quite highly. Frankly, a man who has succeeded in cobbling together a Government out of some 325 treacherous, vain, greedy, scheming rats, skivers, oddballs, dimwits, deadbeats, wide-boys, fainthearts and raving lunatics — and kept the show on the road for

MATTHEW PARRIS
POLITICAL SKETCH

six years — should have no trouble with four young men who at least seem capable of taking a steady view of their own advantage. Never mind Ireland: if Major can swing this, he'll sweep the country.

Tony Blair was confronted again yesterday with the questions raised by his proposal to give Scotland its own parliament. Bill Walker (C. Tayside North) complained about it to Mr Major, but the

Labour Leader remained tight-lipped. Earlier (to Opposition embarrassment) the junior health minister John Bowes had responded to a question from Marion Fyfe (Lab. Glasgow Maryhill): "May I welcome the hon. and Scottish lady to English Health Questions?"

A Scottish parliament, of course, would take responsibility for health north of the border, but Mrs Fyfe could continue to speak and vote on the English National Health Service. The Opposition can find no answer to the dilemma, as there isn't one.

Among new-Labour MPs, the puzzle has become rather like those questions that grown-ups don't ask the vicar because they are so plonkingly basic. It is left to children to enquire: "In Heaven, will Mummy be married to Daddy or to my first Daddy, who died?" Unlike with Mum and Dad, however, it is not open to Mr Blair to reply "Shut up and eat your Frosties", so he just says nothing. But how will he

solve the problem? A Scottish Labour MP suggested yesterday what could well be the answer. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) introduced a Bill for the establishment of national parks in Scotland.

Mr Galbraith is on to a good idea but he is too timid. Why not make the whole of Scotland a national park? The country could be "themed" so there would even be a place to Daddy, who died? Unlike with Mum and Dad, however, it is not open to Mr Blair to reply "Shut up and eat your Frosties", so he just says nothing. But how will he

Windfall of £10bn for cereal farmers

Scotland's senior former MPs could sit while the others donned kilts and became rangers.

As P.G. Wodehouse almost wrote, is it possible to distinguish between a ray of sunshine and a Scots MP with a grievance? But in a theme park the aggrieved tone and surly countenance would be welcomed by tourists as adding to the authenticity of the experience. And the Commons would be rescued from the synchronised gripe they call "Scottish Questions".

Broken hearts, page 5
Jane Gordon, page 15

Europe's beef and cereal farmers have been "overcompensated" by taxpayers to a total of £10 billion over the past three years, the Ministry of Agriculture said yesterday. (Michael Hornby writes.)

Douglas Hogg, the Minister of Agriculture, said the European Union should use the opportunity offered by farming's current prosperity to cut subsidies.

Sir David Naish, the president of the National Farmers' Union, said: "Mr Hogg has ignored the role played by the depreciation of the pound in British farmers' higher returns."

Women win case

Seventeen women health workers who missed out on a pay rise because they were on maternity leave won their claim of discrimination in the European Court of Justice. The court in Luxembourg ruled that Joan Gillespie and 16 other unnamed women, mostly nurses, clearly qualified for the increase. However, it dismissed their claim that women on maternity leave should receive full pay.

Howe on judges

Lord Howe of Aberavon is expected to warn tonight in BBC Radio 4's *Times Past*, *Times Future* of a loss of respect between politicians and judges which is fuelling clashes between them. His concern about the deteriorating relationship between the government and judges is echoed by Judge Stephen Tumim, who says relations have got worse since Michael Howard became Home Secretary.

'Tag' man back

The criminal who, last year, was the first to be electronically tagged was back in court yesterday to plead guilty to shoplifting at two supermarkets. Clive Barratt, 30, of King's Lynn, Norfolk, was given a year's probation after telling the magistrates at Swaffham that he had committed the offences because he had no money to feed his three children, the result of problems with benefits payments.

Bypass evictions

Newbury bypass protesters failed to block moves to evict them from their camps, tunnels and tree-top homes. Sir John Wood, sitting as a High Court judge, ruled that the Department of Transport had lawfully granted possession of land at Snelmore Common occupied by campaigners. The protesters had admitted that they were trespassers on the 8½-mile bypass route.

EU beef warning

Germany was given a warning that three of its provincial governments were violating European Union law by banning imports of British beef for fear of "mad cow" disease. The European Commission in Brussels gave the German Federal Government one month to offer reasons why it should not be taken to the European Court of Justice. It said the import bans violated EU free-trade rules.

Police race case

A black detective has been awarded an estimated £30,000 over an "unfair" annual appraisal by the Metropolitan Police, which he claimed affected his career and salary. Detective Constable Peter Franklin, based at Epsom, won the sum when the force settled his allegation of racial discrimination, and victimisation out of court. He has served 16 years with the Metropolitan Police.

Agreement close on election plan

Bosnia-style deal could revive Irish peace talks

By NICHOLAS WATT
AND PHILIP WEBSTER

BRITAIN and Ireland were edging closer last night to a deal to keep the Northern Ireland peace process on track. The agreement would involve Bosnia-style peace talks to be followed by elections.

As John Major prepared to publish a paper setting out his ideas for elections to a 90-strong assembly, John Bruton told the Irish Parliament that he was ready to talk about elections provided they led directly to the long-desired goal of all-party negotiations. But he made plain that elections should come after the so-called proximity talks involving all parties, similar to the conference in Dayton, Ohio, that settled the war in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr Bruton also criticised the Prime Minister for the speed with which he introduced his election plan within hours of the publication of the Mitchell report on decommissioning arms last month. However, his measured criticism marked a sharp contrast from his original reaction to

David Trimble was joined by a powerful senior yesterday in demanding that President Clinton should cancel the permission granted last March for Sinn Fein to raise funds in the United States, to help put pressure on the IRA to accept a genuine ceasefire. Mr Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, visiting Washington, said Sinn Fein had raised £970,000 in the US. Jesse Helms, Republican chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, said fund-raising rights should be revoked if Mr Adams failed to denounce the latest bombing.

the elections plan, when he said he feared it would "pour petrol on the flames".

Mr Major, who briefed the Rev Ian Paisley yesterday on his proposals for elections, hopes to publish his plans soon. Early ideas are for the body to be made up of about 90 members from 18 multi-member constituencies. They would form three groups who would pursue peace talks with representatives of the British

and Irish Governments. Voting would be by proportional representation.

Mr Bruton, who cut off ministerial contact with Sinn Fein after the Docklands bomb, said his Government's main priority was to find ways of bringing Sinn Fein back into the full political process. But he insisted that this could happen only if the IRA re-started its ceasefire.

"No Government can allow murder, or the threat of murder, to set the political agenda," he said. "Our state is founded on democratic principles... If we accept violence in one area of life then we are opening the door to the acceptability of violence in other areas of life."

However, despite his condemnation of the IRA, his mild criticism of Britain underlined the feeling in the Irish Republic that the ceasefire might have lasted had Britain done more to reward Sinn Fein. These sentiments were spelt out by Bertie Ahern, the former Prime Minister and leader of Fianna Fail. He said that Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, bore most responsibility for the impasse.

"Can it be that we are actually seeing the re-emergence of the old situation where Irish affairs are treated as nothing more than a pawn in the British political game?" he said. "A plausible case could be made for saying that Sir Patrick's job was to manage the Northern Ireland peace process in a way that ensured the survival of the Tory Government rather than the survival of the peace process itself."

Albert Reynolds, his predecessor as Irish Prime Minister, said yesterday that he believed the IRA would restore its ceasefire if a date was set for all-party talks. Mr Reynolds, whose Government helped to broker the ceasefire in 1994, was speaking after meeting Gerry Adams in Dundalk.

The Sinn Fein president said after the meeting that it would be difficult "to put this back on the rails". But he came close to echoing Mr Reynolds' comments when he added: "Obviously the only way is for real talks and all-party talks. That is one of the reasons why it collapsed, because the British broke the commitment they made to that about."

Dick Spring, the Irish Deputy Prime Minister, called for a "process of intensive discussion" to overcome the stand-off over elections. He said that "clarifications" provided by Mr Major's statement yesterday would make it easier for the "elective approach" to be considered.

Almost 60 staff responded to the emergency call on Friday night, including telephonists, porters, radiographers and managers as well as surgeons, doctors and nurses. Gerry Green, the hospital's chief executive, said the Prince's visit had boosted morale.

Mr Bashir was buried near his home in Streatham, south London, yesterday, after a private family service at the Croydon Mosque.

Photograph, page 24

Prince speaks to bomb victim on hospital visit

By RUSSELL JENKINS

THE Prince of Wales spoke to a bomb victim who suffered more than 100 lacerations to her face when he visited the Royal London Hospital yesterday. Barbara Osei, 23, was recovering from eye surgery at Bart's Hospital but requested to return to the Royal London to meet the Prince. She is due to be released shortly.

The Prince also met the emergency team who coped with 37 injured people — most of them cut by flying glass — when they arrived in the Whitechapel hospital's accident and emergency department. Tea and cakes with nurses and surgeons followed a visit to the concrete and twisted metal of South Quay, in the shadow of Canary Wharf, where the Prince was shown the extent of the bomb damage.

Flanked by Sir Paul Condon, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, and Commander John Grieve, head of the Anti-Terrorist Branch, he went to the spot where Inan Bashir, 29, a newsagent, and his friend John Jefferies, 31, died. Afterwards he met emergency service workers at Limehouse police station, where he praised the courage of police

officers injured in the explosion. Among them was PC Roger de Graaf, who first identified the terrorists' lorry as a suspect vehicle.

Sergeant Anthony Gielty, one of the first on the scene, said: "He told us all we had done a marvellous job and thanked us for our efforts. He asked us to pass on regards to PC Paul Whiting, who has damaged ears caused by the explosion."

Two bomb victims are still being treated in hospital. Zain Berrezag, 55, was woken yesterday for the first time since Friday, but is being kept in intensive care on a ventilator and remains critical. The other, Ms Osei, is waiting to have stitches removed.

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Photograph, page 24

Newcastle officials move to force closure of school

By PAUL WILKINSON

ONE of Britain's worst schools in terms of truancy and exam failure has been earmarked for closure.

By recommending the closure of Blakelaw comprehensive in the tough West End district of Newcastle upon Tyne, education officials have moved in advance of an inspection in October by the Office of Education Standards. Blakelaw is scheduled to close at the end of summer in 1997.

The Government's latest league tables show that last summer only one in ten pupils achieved five or more GCSE passes between grades A and C. The city's average was almost three times higher at 28 per cent, still well below the national average of 43.5 per cent. One in four of Blakelaw's pupils skipped classes.

Parents have already shown their attitude. With 563 pupils, the school is operating at little more than half its capacity. Built in 1963, it has the

smallest sixth form in Newcastle with just 18 students and only offers one A level course.

The pupils will be distributed among other schools in the area, but the 35 staff have yet to be told whether they will be employed.

Darren Murphy, Newcastle education committee's chairman, said: "In the end you have to take the view — is it better to wait or reverse a decline, or is it better to take action? Young people only get one chance at a good education and it would not be right to wait for the inevitable which would be ever-decreasing numbers forcing the school to close anyway."

Terry Cooney, the governors' chairman, said: "I don't think there is any real alternative. I would like to see the school saved but there isn't a formula that allows it."

There was distress yesterday among staff many of whom first heard the news on local radio on their way to work. Jeffery Curd, the head-

Private cash for building

PIMLICO School, a symbol of the 1960s and comprehensive education, yesterday became the first state school to seek private funding for rebuilding. The pioneering project has the blessing of Jack Straw, its chairman of governors and the Shadow Home Secretary (David Chatterton).

Tory-controlled Westminster City Council aims to find £18.5 million from commercial backers to redesign, build and manage the school under the Government's private finance initiative.

Potential bidders will be able to recover their investment by building housing on the site or running a private sports club using the school out of hours. The school's low-rise concrete and glass design won awards when it opened in 1970 but has quickly fallen into disrepair. Annual upkeep costs £570,000.

Church now the Lib Dems at prayer

Continued from page 1

lack of the clear voice is damaging the Church. Part of the problem is that the synods, from deanery to General Synod, spend a great deal of time talking about things which do not necessarily matter. The people who serve on these bodies tend to be people who have time, money and the interest to do so. But they are not necessarily truly representative of the man or woman in the pew."

Lord Runcie, the former Archbishop of Canterbury questioned the validity of some of the findings. The leaders of the Church of England are major players in the current debate about di-

vorce reform. It is a major piece of moral legislation. They are doing what they can. But if the Synod members think the answer is to make moral pronouncements then that is within their own power."

Lord Runcie believed that priority should be given to recruitment of young intelligent people to articulate the faith of the church. "It is raising the standard of church life, in the parishes of England, which matters most."

Mr Bruynvels said that when he was first elected to the Synod in 1985 he was one of four elected Tory MPs, now there is only one —

Sir Patrick Cormack, Mr Bruynvels accepted that Conservative influence in the Church was declining, but

Leading article, page 17

Three counties defy budget limits

By IAN MURRAY
COMMUNITY CORRESPONDENT

THREE of the first four English counties to set their budgets agreed yesterday to spend more than the Government allows over the next year.

Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire want to raise council tax beyond government limits to pay for the increase. Wiltshire is to dig deep into its reserves to finance its overspend.

The increases are only the beginning of the extra amount residents will have to pay. The final bills will include not only the figure for the county but the additional amounts levied by districts and parishes.

All three are hung councils

and the budgets for them were agreed only because Labour and the Liberal Democrats voted together against Tory councillors who wanted to stay inside the government-imposed spending limits.

Cambridgeshire decided on a £408 million budget, which is £5.8 million above its cap. If the council can now persuade the Government to approve the budget, residents will face an initial 9 per cent increase in council tax plus inevitable further rises in the amounts yet to be levied by district and parish councils.

Even if it is allowed to raise the extra money the council will have to use it by 6.2 per cent before districts and parish councils are levied. The year before last Oxfordshire drew

£8.6 million from its reserves, which are down to £3 million.

Wiltshire, which had a spending cap of £330, decided to draw £5.85 million from its reserves to boost its budget to £336 million. Some savings will be made in administration costs, but all front-line services are to be preserved. Council tax for the county will rise by 1.6 per cent.

Breaking through the cap is an expensive gamble. If councils fail to persuade the Government that they are justified, they have to rebill council tax payers at an average cost of £500,000. That so many appear ready to take the risk shows how sincerely they believe they need to raise more money to maintain services.

Windfall
of £10bn
for cereal
farmers

Desperately seeking synergy

So long then, Videotron. Or rather, Videotron. The Canadian owners of Britain's sixth largest cable television company are pulling back in Montreal, to concentrate their money in North America where they can see some reward.

It is fitting that Kenneth Baker, MP, remains on the board of the British company, which is seeking new investors to buy the Canadian stake. Videotron Holdings will continue to operate the Videotron cable franchises in London and the South East. It was Mr Baker, as Trade and Industry Secretary, who in 1981 beckoned Britain down the golden road leading to the "wired nation". Fifteen years later, however, the road is murky. British homes which have been lured by multi-channel television have chosen, by about four to one, to receive these extra channels from a satellite dish and a dish on the roof, not from a duct in the ground.

The low popularity of cable in those areas where it has been laid is the main reason for Videotron's withdrawal. Only 20.8 per cent of homes offered the service have taken it. This is less than half the penetration rate achieved in the United States — the inspiration for Mr Baker's dream.

Britain's comparative indifference, however, reflects, perversely, to Mr Baker's credit, for he insisted that the television cable must be buried underground. In America it hangs thickly festooned from telephone poles. Burying cable greatly increases the costs of installing a system and the high cost greatly discouraged British investors.

As a result, years went by before cable was installed on any appreciable scale and the main investors have been giant North American telephone companies. In the meantime, satellite television offered by BSkyB (40 per cent owned by News International, the owner of *The Times*) got a headstart.

But Videotron may be pulling out of Britain at just the wrong time. The old dream of the wired nation was based on technical reality: the same capacious cable that brings in television pictures can also bring in telecommunications — voice telephone calls and computer data. And suddenly in Britain, unlike America, cable telephone has taken off. By undercutting British Telecom's



BRENDA MADDOX

the same question, "Is it worth it?", hangs over last week's mysterious merger of MAI, the group which controls the ITV companies, Meridian and Anglia, with United News and Media, which publishes the *Daily Express*. There is no logic to it, just the same hazy faith in synergy — that some day information and entertainment print and screen will all wash as one big tub of electronic data.

But Lord Hollick, head of MAI, seems to be convinced that the short-term gains from cross-promotion of television by newspapers justifies allying his company with the owners of the declining *Express*. MAI owns a chunk of the new Channel 5, the terrestrial channel which starts next January.

Just to grow bigger may be sufficient motive in itself. The trick is to do it without getting too big. The Independent Television Commission's limits on audience and advertising share stand in the way of the instinct to go as big as possible.

Cherry Coke wants people to "discover" the drink themselves

new type face). But the new cans are being covered with a plastic wrap printed with the old design. Only if you look closely do you notice that you can peel it off. It's all about discovery," says Medd.

Trendy club nights organised by Cherry Productions and wrap-up gimmicks like this will, Coca-Cola hopes, intrigue its young buyers. And to keep them intrigued, Medd's marketing

Andrew Mitchell on how Coca-Cola is using discovery marketing

Go along to Mayfair's Kent club sometime this month and, if you're young enough to enter, you'll find a different world. The place is draped in black and red; there are cherries everywhere. Cherry Productions, which has kindly laid on the evening's entertainment, has also provided hairdressers, make-up artists, Red or Dead fashion clothes, and before-and-after photographers for punters who want to leave their old selves behind.

If everything goes right for Cherry Productions, once a month, 1,000 young souls will leave the club with a new brand on their lips. And they'll pass the message on via youth culture's jungle-drum.

Cherry Production's problem is that it is a front for the world's biggest advertising machine — Coca-Cola. But it has to content itself with tiny, low-profile promotions like this because anything more might threaten away its target market.

Since the brand is pushing Cherry Coke — was launched in the UK ten years ago hardly a penny has been spent on advertising it. Yet teenagers are buying it in ever-greater numbers (sales have doubled over the past two years) partly because, its marketers suspect, they have done nothing to market it. Youngsters have discovered the brand for themselves, says Andrew Medd, the marketing manager.

Now that upstart Virgin Cola has introduced curvy new containers that give a strong and cheeky hint of the famous Coca-Cola bottle, Cherry Coke marketers hope their club nights will help solve their dilemma. They are entering the subterranean world of "discovery marketing", where a verbal recommendation has far more influence than a TV commercial; where being different really matters; where the measure of a brand's "in-ness" is, in part, a product of its obscurity.

Cherry Coke is now being relaunched as "different". And it is a relaunch with a difference, of course. No fanfares. No glitz ad campaigns. Even Cherry's new packaging is being kept under wraps. Literally.

Its old bubblegum-pink design ("it was the prom queen of soft drinks," confesses one of its marketing team) is being replaced by black and red striped graffiti-style packaging for which Coca-Cola has invented a

Letting the secret out of the can



Cherry Coke wants people to "discover" the drink themselves

team is now searching for any event, stunt, sponsorship or activity that will attract their attention.

Marketers always differentiate their products — trying to get consumers to notice something special about them — but Cherry Coke is "selling difference itself", he boasts. "We are like teenagers. We are consciously trying to be different for the sake of it. We want to be attributed as

the cause of different things happening. We want to attach ourselves to people who do different things," Medd says.

Typical Coca-Cola type? Of course. But it also represents a shift. Traditional mass advertising is having to play second fiddle to new communication channels. In the end, there will be TV ads, but only after months of stunts have spread the word among teenagers.

And Coca-Cola is even prepared to alienate some potential consumers. Strong negative reactions by some can help spur greater loyalty among others, and that is much better than mass indifference, suggests George Bradt, Coca-Cola's UK marketing director.

But Cherry Coke represents a bigger difference for the Coca-Cola marketing machine. The main brand is like a supermodel, says Bradt. Even the slightest touch to the tiller — a change to the formula, a tweak to the revised packaging and design — is a momentous multi-million dollar decision with global ramifications. Coca-Cola marketers are, in effect, slaves to the brand's heritage. In contrast, the whole point about a brand like Cherry Coke is that "it can reinvent itself every year," says Bradt. That makes difference "a fascinating strategy".

Behind that, there is an even bigger shift. Caught napping by the rise of so-called New Age drinks like Snapple, and amid signs that leading-edge American consumers are turning away from oversweet fizzy drinks, Coca-Cola is busy trying to turn itself into a "total beverages" company.

In Japan it is huge in coffee. In America and parts of Europe it is big in orange juice. And having burnt its fingers with the disastrous launch of New Coke a decade ago, the company is now desperately trying to summon up the courage to innovate. "We have to accept that some will succeed and some will fail," says Bradt.

One recent failure is OK Soda. A carbonated delivered in grey grunge packaging, it was introduced into the US with street-cred imagery and targeted at teenagers. And they swiftly shunned it. The product has since been withdrawn. "There was some terrific learning," says Bradt. Cherry Coke, he adds, will be different.

How to sell 200m extra newspapers

Brian MacArthur on the rapidly-rising Sun

A NEW record sale of 4,670,000 (almost outselling its Sunday stablemate, the *News of the World*) was achieved by *The Sun* on the last Saturday in January. Its booming Saturday sales lifted the paper to an average sale last month of 4,128,000, up 22,000 on a year ago, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Since its cover price was slashed to 20p in June 1993, *The Sun* has increased sales by more than 660,000 — selling an extra 200 million more papers a year — and has doubled its lead over the *Daily Mirror* to more than 1.5 million a day. *The Sun* now accounts for almost one in three national daily sales, in spite of recent price rises.

At an average of 687,992, up 56,000 on a year ago, *The Times* also set a new sales record. Since the cover price was reduced in 1993, sales are up by 333,000 and still increasing, again in spite of recent increases in price. Its share of the daily broadsheet market has almost doubled to 25 per cent.

The effect of cutting prices (and subsequently increasing them in gentle doses) has boosted sales of tabloids (up 274,000 year-on-year) and broadsheets (54,000).

There is a more dramatic change, however: in three of the past seven months, the daily broadsheets have, for the first time, outsold the heavyweight Sundays. The reason is the success of the dailies' bumper Saturday editions, seen increasingly as serious rivals to the Sundays. More papers are now sold on Saturday than any other day of the week.

Meanwhile an urgent priority for Clive Hollick, the Labour life peer who will soon be chief executive of the merged MAI/United Newspapers group which owns Express Newspapers, is to stop declining sales. Three of the five papers with the biggest falls in sales last month were Express titles, with the *Sunday Express* down year-on-year by 152,000, the *Daily Star* down by 58,200 and the *Daily Express* down by 31,200.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Title	Average sales (000s)	% change on Jan 95
Daily Mail	2,065	+14.0
The Times	887	+8.0
The Mail on Sunday	2,134	+8.7
Financial Times	295	+5.7
Daily Mirror	2,560	+4.0
Sunday Express	1,286	-10.8
The Observer	449	-5.0
Daily Star	688	-7.8
News of the World	4,117	-2.8
Daily Express	2,285	-2.4

Source: ABC — January 1996

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NEWS

Church is now Lib Dems at prayer

■ The Church of England has moved from being a bastion of middle-aged, middle-class men to a body that is increasingly left-wing, anti-tradition and strongly influenced by women.

A survey of more than 500 members of the General Synod portrays a Church driven by self-doubt and concerned more with the Third World and ecology than traditional areas of Christian morality, such as adultery.....Page 1

Major rebuffs Scott over report access

■ John Major sparked fresh protests over the Scott report by rebuffing a personal appeal from Sir Richard Scott, backed by Tony Blair, to allow MPs to see it early. He said that the 1,800-page report into the arms-to-Iraq affair had been made available "only to those ministers or civil servants who need to see it in order to help prepare the response".....Page 1

Opium arrest

The daughter of a British businessman is facing a possible death sentence after being arrested at Bangkok airport and charged with carrying nearly 9lb of opium.....Page 1

Lost cave world

Details of a world cut off in a Romanian cave for more than five million years and containing 31 unknown species were described to scientists.....Page 6

Mountain saved

Residents of a tiny rural community in Wales have been awarded £1 million of lottery money to buy the heather-clad mountain to prevent it being quarried for sandstone.....Page 7

Rifkind resistance

Malcolm Rifkind resisted demands from Tory Eurosceptics for the Government's White Paper on the EU to include radical proposals on the single currency and repatriation of powers from Brussels.....Page 8

Germans reject army

Many young Germans are rejecting military service — 161,000 registered as conscientious objectors last year — at a time when Germany is trying to project itself as a military force.....Page 9

Purple prose

Joan Collins' main ingredients for her book were "money and sex and power and sex and intrigue and sex", her lawyers admitted but they said her prose was "not unreadable".....Page 3

Scenic order

The owner of an 18th-century mansion which used as a setting in the forthcoming Emma Thompson film of *Sense and Sensibility* has been ordered to conduct vital repairs or face losing the Grade I listed property.....Page 3

Taken That

Take That, whose music and carefully choreographed dance routines caused many a teenage heart to throb, are now breaking hearts by splitting up.....Page 5

Snugglebunny loves Doodle, OK

■ Elsewhere in this issue *The Times* relaxes its usual linguistic standards and, in the belief that true romance is still a small candle in a naughty world, permits Snoozypops to ask Diddly Wumps for snuggle pie. For it is St Valentine's Day, when we celebrate a celibate bishop beheaded in Rome for his Christian faith by the Emperor Claudius.....Pages 1, 20, 21



The Prince of Wales points to his eye as he talks to PC Roger de Graaf who received an eye injury in the Docklands bombing. Pages 1, 2

BUSINESS

Lottery: Sales of instant scratch cards hit their lowest level last week — £19.3 million against £44.4 million in May.....Page 25

Fighting talk: British Aerospace and McDonnell Douglas of the United States have unveiled plans for a tail-less aircraft to replace the Harrier jump jet and the F16 Eagle, the world's most successful post-war strike aircraft.....Page 25

Tax battle: Unilever won a £17 million battle with the taxman in the Court of Appeal, during which the Inland Revenue was accused of abusing its powers.....Page 26

Markets: The FT-SE 100 rose 21.0 to 3747.6. Sterling rose from \$3.8 to \$4.2 after a rise from \$1.5310 to \$1.5337, and from DM2.2644 to DM2.2663.....Page 26

Crippled Dole

The first heat in the prolonged race for the White House left Robert Dole all but crippled as he limped away from the Iowa caucuses.....Page 10

Hutu misery

Zairean troops blockaded the largest Hutu refugee camp in Goma in a campaign to drive inmates back to Rwanda — Page 11

Geoff Brown reviews Othello, starring Irene Jacob and Laurence Fishburne, and other new film releases

Derwent May on Frederick Brown's biography of Zola

Washington Post

Cricket: England players have had to adapt to an alien way of life as they prepared to open the World Cup against New Zealand in Aramedabad.....Pages 45, 48

Tennis: The much-heralded return of Jennifer Capriati, the American player, had to be postponed when she was injured in training for the Paris Open championships.....Page 46

Rugby union: Wales kept faith with their young players and earned an unchanged team for the five nations' championship match against Scotland at Cardiff.....Page 48

Skiing: Aile Skarsdal, of Norway, led a Scandinavian domination of the men's super giant slalom at the world championships in Spain. Scandinavians filled five of the first six places.....Page 42

Miller's Handel: In Blackheath, Jonathan Miller has devised an ingenious semi-staging of Handel's opera *Rodelinda*.....Page 40

Cherry Coke: Does the secret of the success lie in teenagers discovering it for themselves?.....Page 23

Vice-Admiral Sir Stephen Carill

last British Indian Navy commander; Neil Franklin, footballer; General Adolf Galland, German fighter ace; Alexander Sedyh, American journalist.....Page 1

Peter Ridell

At heart Frank Field is still committed to a redistributive system. He may engage in friendly debate with Peter Lilley. But their approaches are wholly different.....Page 4

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More Euromyths

Seven years on

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THE TIMES

BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 14 1996

National Lottery scratchcards down on their luck



SALES of National Lottery Instant hits its lowest level last week, amid signs of growing hostility in the crowded UK scratchcard market. Instant sales slipped to £19.3 million, crowning seven successive weeks of lacklustre performance.

Sales have been falling steadily from a weekly peak of £44.4 million in May 1995, not long after instant sales were launched. Camelot, the National Lottery operator, has introduced several new games in the hope of boosting sales, but without success. It faces additional challenges from rival operators, such as Littlewoods, the pools group, Scratch-n-Win, backed by Lord Mancroft, the anti-drugs peer, and Lucy Loto, which is advertising heavily to try to boost sales interest in the televised National

Lottery draw has boosted on-line ticket sales well above the "usual" spend of £65 million a week. On-line sales peaked at nearly £128 million in the week of the double rollover in early January, and were £75.5 million in the week to February 10. Sales of Instant sales were running at £25 million or more a week until Christmas, but have tailed off sharply since then.

Camelot always expected Instant sales to account for 20 to 30 per cent of total sales, and says that the decline mirrors the pattern overseas. However, current levels are at the low end of expectations, and there are signs that the public has become confused by the wide variety of games on offer.

Camelot currently has ten games on sale, including Noughts & Crosses and

Aces High. Scratch-n-Win has six on sale. Littlewoods runs several games on behalf of specific charities, and claims sales of £1.4 million a week.

Scratch-n-Win will not disclose precise figures, but expects sales to top £100 million "comfortably" this year, if January is anything to go by.

UK Charity Lotteries, the name behind Lucy Loto, hopes to reap an extra £300,000 a week in sales from its current advertising blitz. Weekly sales are currently running at about £1.3 million.

For every £1 spent on a Camelot scratchcard, 12 per cent goes to the Government, 5 per cent to retailers, 5 per cent to the company and 25 per cent to the five "good causes" that benefit from lottery funds. The company is

supposed to put the remaining 50p into the prize pool, but in fact puts 55p into it for every card sold. It is able to do this because it effectively subsidises the scratchcard prizes from the money it gets from its on-line game.

Peter Davis, Director General of the National Lottery, allows this because the overall amount of money that Camelot puts into the combined pool of its scratchcard and on-line games comes to about 50 per cent.

Charity scratchcard operators have long complained that this is unfair. Unlike Camelot, charity scratchcards are ruled by the Gaming Board, which insists that the charities put only 50p per £1 scratchcard into the prize pool.

Pennington, page 27

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET PRICES

FTSE 100	3747.6	(+21.0)
FTSE All share	1841.55	(+8.32)
Nikkei	20784.23	(-150.58)
New York:		
Dow Jones	5609.54	(+9.32)
S&P Composites	662.35	(+0.50)

US RATE

Federal Funds	5.5%	(5.5%)
Long Bond	9.9%	(9.9%)

YIELD

3-mth Interbank	6.5%	(6.5%)
Future (Mar)	109.5%	(109.5%)

STERLING

Yen	1.5342*	(1.5290)
London	1.5362	(1.5309)
DM	2.2670	(2.2525)
FF	7.8250	(7.8116)
SP	1.8520	(1.8367)
Yen	164.05	(163.31)
E Index	84.5	(85.8)

£55.54 DOLLAR

DM	1.4776*	(1.4762)
FF	5.0230	(5.0250)
SP	1.2065	(1.2055)
Yen	106.80	(106.85)
E Index	95.2	(95.0)

Tokyo close Yen 106.57

NORTH SEA OIL

Brent 15-day (Apr)	\$17.10	(\$16.35)
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* denotes midday trading price

Reuters hints at cash pile bonus for shareholders

By ERIC REGULY

REUTERS, the financial information and electronic trading group, hinted yesterday that it will announce a share buyback or special dividend by next year in an effort to reduce its £50 million mountain of cash.

Peter Job, chief executive, said: "We are actively exploring ways of returning surplus cash to shareholders in a manner consistent with the interest of all shareholders."

Market expectations boosted Reuters shares by 31p to 67.5p, a record high.

A buyback appears the more likely of the options. Reuters, having completed a £350 million buyback in 1993, then equivalent to 4 per cent of its equity, knows how to solve the associated tax and legal problems.

The cash pile at Reuters grew by £316 million over the past year as the company recorded strong revenue and profit growth in its global operations. Few acquisitions and slightly lower capital spending added to the cash reserves. The desire to return

value to shareholders suggests that no large acquisition or diversification plan is in the works. Reuters has spent only £200 million on acquisitions in the past five years and said it has no desire to become a conglomerate like Dun & Bradstreet, the financial services and audience ratings group that is now breaking itself up.

Reuters reported a pre-tax profit of £59.9 million for the year to December 31, up 17 per cent from the £51.0 million profit in 1994. Earnings per share were 25.8p against 21.7p and the operating margins increased from 19.9 per cent to 20.4 per cent.

Revenues were up 17 per cent to £2.7 billion, partly because of a 31 per cent revenue growth, to £243 million, at Instinet, its automated share dealing system.

Reuters said it was confident it could maintain double-digit earnings growth this year, but could not be assured of similar revenue growth.

Temps, page 28

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Unilever wins fight with taxman

By OUR CITY STAFF

UNILEVER, the multinational trading group, yesterday won a £17 million battle with the taxman.

Sir Thomas Bingham, Master of the Rolls, said in a judgment in the Court of Appeal that the Inland Revenue had abused its powers with a company that had a reputation as a "model taxpayer".

He said it had disallowed corporation tax rebate claims by Unilever to take into account trading losses because the company had not complied with a two-year time limit.

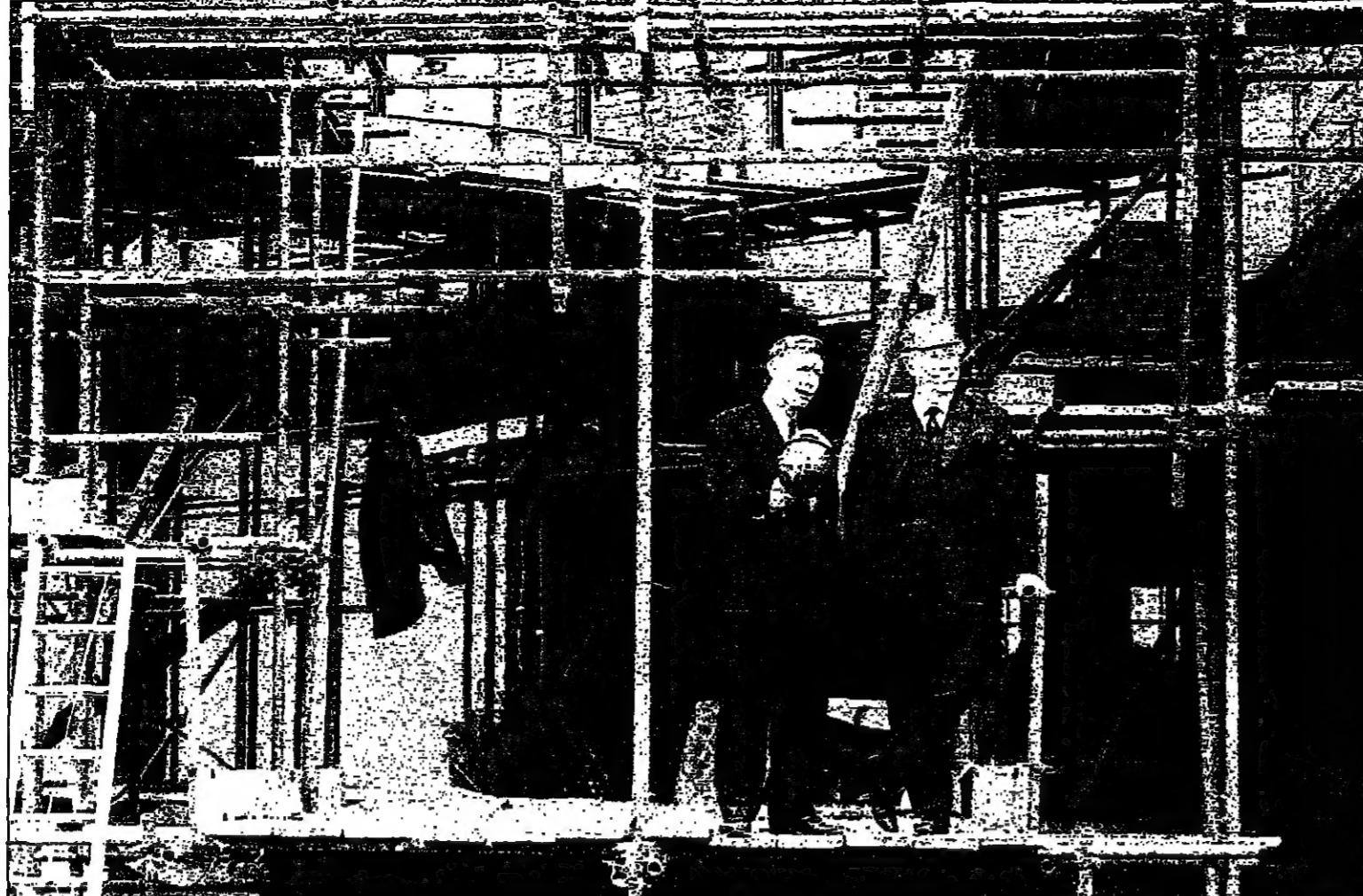
Legislation was amended from March 31, 1991, so that claims must be made within two years unless the Revenue allows longer.

But in an examination of 1,247 Unilever companies for accounting periods since 1969, there were 116 instances of trading losses. Of those, only 40 tax claims were presented after the two-year period's expiry.

The Revenue challenged ten of these, but allowed 30 "without comment or question or objection". Sir Thomas said Unilever and the Revenue had a "consensual procedure" that had worked for many years.

When the Revenue objected to the loss relief and demanded full payment, Unilever applied for judicial review in the High Court where it was ruled that the Revenue could not in fairness, having regard to its past conduct, treat the claim as time-barred.

Dismissing the Revenue's appeal, Sir Thomas said that to reject Unilever's claims in reliance on the time limit, without clear notice, was so unfair as to amount to an abuse of power.



Anthony Glossop, left, chief executive of St Modwen Properties, and Stan Clarke, chairman, increased the total dividend 31 per cent to 2.1p a share after reporting a 6.4 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £10 million for the year to November 30. Net assets rose 8.2 per cent to 53p a share

Construction orders rise but outlook still gloomy

By JANET BUSH, ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

CONSTRUCTION orders reached their highest level for two years in December but the industry still gave a warning that its workload would continue to decline and job losses expected during the early part of this year.

The Construction Industry Employers Council (CIEC) lambasted the Government for failing to give momentum to the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and so replace cuts in construction capital spending.

The Department of the Environment said that the total

volume of new orders in the fourth quarter was 21 per cent higher than in the third quarter, and 20 per cent higher than in the final three months of 1994.

However, it gave a warning that the jump in orders was

the result of a small number of large contracts in the private commercial and industrial sectors. It noted that, overall, orders in 1995 were 4 per cent down on the previous year because of sharp drops in both the public and private housing sectors.

Martin Laing, chairman of

the CIEC, acknowledged that yesterday's figures were encouraging and that they could constitute the first genuine sign that construction orders could be on the start of an upward path. But he still insisted that there is considerable uncertainty.

Mr Laing said that there were two urgent requirements that must be met if the continuing decline in the construction industry was to be reversed: a return to confidence in the housing market and Government action to galvanise the private finance

industry into generating substantial numbers of new projects quickly.

Mr Laing said the Government had repeatedly expressed the wish to set an example as a "best practice client" of the construction industry. However, it had conspicuously failed to do this, in three crucial areas — the need for quality instead of the lowest price; the need for single-point responsibility for projects; and the Government's poor track record on prompt payments.

He added: "We are committed to making a success of the PFI but our commitment is not open-ended. We cannot continue to tolerate the prohibitively high tendering costs for PFI projects which we are facing at present."

Mr Laing also complained about low investment, including in construction, claiming that to date the share of annual output going to this end had dropped by a quarter in the 1990s. However, he was more hopeful on prospects for the housing market, saying that tax cuts taking effect in two months' time would help as long as interest rates are pitched and maintained at the lowest possible level.

A spokesman for BICC said that allegations of corruption which led to Singapore's ban would be contested. Singapore named five companies in relation to the conviction of a key official at the Public Utilities Board, who was recently jailed for 14 years for corruption and criminal conspiracy. The other companies were Siemens of Germany, Italy's Prelli and Japan's Tomen Corporation and Marubeni Corporation.

BICC said that it is pumping \$11 million into a \$45 million cablemaking factory in Indonesia. BICC is also establishing a data cable systems business in the Philippines at a cost of \$10 million.

Singapore BICC ban contested

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

ACTION by the Singapore authorities to ban a subsidiary of BICC, the cable and construction operation, from new government contracts in the next five years brought a swift appeal from the company, which yesterday announced cablemaking expansion in Asia-Pacific.

News of the ban, which affects all work with Singapore's Public Utilities Board, with whom BICC has worked for more than ten years, cannot derail BICC's plans to build a cablemaking factory in Indonesia.

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Pennington, page 27

Superscape shares soar on IBM deal

SHARES in Superscape VR surged 75p to 539p after the virtual reality software company unveiled a potentially lucrative worldwide distribution deal — thought to be worth more than \$3 million — with IBM, the US computer group.

IBM will market and sell Superscape's virtual reality software and related services, such as consultancy and training, throughout Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the former USSR. Agreements covering the Asia-Pacific and important North and South American markets are also in the offing. Superscape's market capitalisation has increased from £38.8 million to £45 million.

Atari plans merger

ATARI, the US computer and video games company, is to merge with JTS Corp, a privately owned disk-drive manufacturer, as part of a diversification away from entertainment. Atari has had difficulty maintaining its position in the games industry against Sega and Nintendo, its Japanese rivals. Atari shareholders will own 60 per cent of the merged company. JTS was formed in 1994 by Jugi Tandon, the company's chairman. He will be chairman of the new company.

Sun Alliance slips

SHARES in Sun Alliance fell 6p to 362p yesterday after Chubb Corp, its US partner, announced it was reducing the amount of business the two insurers cede to each other. Annually, Sun Alliance supplies £200 million of business to Chubb and receives £300 million back. Sun Alliance confirmed business was likely to reduce by a third this year, next year, and a further third in 1998. A spokesman for the UK insurer said the partnership had been working since 1882. Chubb holds 5 per cent of Sun Alliance, while Sun holds under 3 per cent of Chubb.

Earle leads action group

FRASER EARLE, a former chief executive of Standard Chartered's China business, will head an action group of shareholders in two Classic Bloodstock companies, the troubled racing investment group that has raised nearly £5 million from 7,000 investors. At an emergency meeting of Classic Bloodstock II last month, it emerged that the company had raised £2.7 million of which £1.4 million was spent on postage and stationery and a further £1 million on promotion and marketing. Only £91,700 was spent on purchasing six horses.

Biotrace chief named

BIOTRACE INTERNATIONAL, the biotech diagnostics company where Brian Levett, chief executive, left abruptly in November, will today name his successor, Jim Keir, until last April managing director of Amersham International's international trading and technologies division, is joining immediately. Biotrace, whose main products detect food contamination and are based on the enzyme that allows fireflies to glow in the dark, floated in November 1993 at a price of 130p. Yesterday the shares closed at 39p.

US pay rising slowly

AMERICAN workers' pay and benefits rose by 2.9 per cent last year, the smallest annual increase since the US Government began tracking such changes in 1982. The US Labor Department said that the rise in its Employment Cost Index was held back by the steepest advance on record in benefits such as health care and holidays. Many analysts had expected an even smaller employee cost increase last year, of about 2.6 per cent. The previous yearly low for the index was 3 per cent in 1994.

Danka raises £128m

DANKA BUSINESS SYSTEMS, the office equipment supplier whose shares are listed in London, has placed 17 million shares, mostly in the form of American Depository Shares (ADS), with institutional investors at \$42 per ADS, equivalent to 683p a share. Each ADS represents four ordinary shares. Proceeds of the placing, estimated at £128.4 million, will be used to reduce borrowings arising from the acquisition of Infotech Europe BV. Existing Danka shares fell 3p to 700p yesterday.

Fisons Scientific ahead

FISONS SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTS saw a strong turnaround with operating profits of £5.7 million in the 12 months to December 31. The company lost £9.8 million in the previous year and £38 million in 1993. The recovery was attributed to a 10 per cent rise in turnover to £286.3 million and costs cuts. Employees were reduced by 9 per cent to 2,796 by the year end. Fisons Scientific Instruments is now owned by Rhône Poulen Rorer, which is negotiating its sale to Thermo Instruments Systems of the US for £202 million.

Warning from EMH

SHARES in European Motor Holdings fell 8p to 82p yesterday after the company said that annual profits would fall to about £6.5 million before tax from a reported £7.9 million in the previous 12 months. Richard Palmer, chief executive, said that trading in the motor retail division had fallen significantly below budget in the past two months. This reflected adverse weather conditions and a change in product cycles by auto manufacturers. Depressed retail demand had affected initial contributions from new franchises.

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Wakeham: no fixed term

IT IS a very French way to sort out a basket case. Rather than the shattered careers, massive job losses and brutal finality that goes with the Anglo-Saxon system of receivership, the French send in impartial mediators to seek a civilised solution.

Lord Wakeham and Robert Badinter, the two mediators appointed last week, have no fixed term of contract and are not obliged to make a formal report at the end of their deliberations.

They can see who they like, meeting when they like and where they like. As Sir Alastair Morton put it, they can hold their meetings in a bar if they want to — the

emphasis is on informality. The best translation of "mandataires ad hoc" might be a "wise man" or *amicus curiae*, a friend of the court.

Their priority is to find a solution to an employer's problems that will preserve jobs, not to act as the representative of a buying mob of creditors as under the Anglo-Saxon tradition.

French law emphasises, in order of priority, the continu-

ation of the company and the jobs it provides, the preservation of the shareholders' interests and finally those of creditors.

Their eventual recommendations, if any are produced, are non-binding and can only be implemented with the agreement of the main parties involved.

Although few of the many

parties involved in the

Eurotunnel crisis objected to the appointments yesterday,

there is little optimism that they will find an acceptable compromise solution to a problem that has studied one of the finest financial brains in London and Paris.

Eurotunnel's banks were

last night trying to take a positive view of the development.

Although some have

expressed concern that

Eurotunnel might use the

appointment of mediators as a

negotiating tool, bringing the

threat of liquidation closer,

others said it might actually

help to resolve the deadlock in talks.

Study backs new job count

By PHILIP BASSETT, INDUSTRIAL EDITOR

THE Government should introduce a new survey-based measure of unemployment each month, in addition to the regular count of jobless claimants, according to a new government study.

The Central Statistical Office (CSO) will publish tomorrow a report on jobless figures commissioned by the CSO from David Steel, an Australian statistician. Details were given yesterday to the Com-

munity's Employment Select Committee.

Dr Steel recommends a monthly version of the current Labour Force Survey (LFS), an internationally accepted measure of unemployment. Every three months it collects labour market data from 60,000 households. To save on costs, Dr Steel proposes collecting the full LFS data from only a third of the sample each month. Some ministers are

sceptical, but may be swayed by the prospect of more accurate charting.

The cost of a monthly LFS could rise to about £14 million annually from between £5 million and £6 million at present.

Ministers hope that new claimant count unemployment figures, to be released today, will show a further fall.

Back to work, page 29

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NOTICE TO HALIFAX INVESTORS

Halifax Building Society announces new rates for Special Reserve Bond, Treasurer's Account, Bonus Gold and Solid Gold accounts, and for certain balances on Liquid Gold accounts, from 15th February 1996. All other interest rates on investment accounts remain unchanged. Full details of all other interest rates for Liquid Gold and other Halifax investment accounts are available at any Halifax branch.

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1/2% 1% 2%	1/2% 1% 2%	1/2% 1% 2%	1/2% 1% 2%	1/2% 1% 2%	1/2% 1% 2%
SPECIAL RESERVE BOND					
£10,000+	6.20%	-	4.45%	-	-
BONUS GOLD (inc. bonus)					
£10,000+	4.05%	-	4.50%	-	5.05%
£20,000+	4.75%	-	4.31%	-	5.05%
£30,000+	5.25%	-	5.00%	-	5.45%
£40,000+	5.75%	-	5.24%	-	5.75%
£50,000+	6.25%	-	5.54%	-	6.05%
Monthly Income Option (inc. bonus)	5.85%	6.00%			

□ Waning popularity of Instants □ Barings investors take threefold aim □ Desperate paradoxes for the French economy

Scratch fails to relieve the itch

□ YOU CAN see them in their down-at-heels thousands at newsagents in dingy shopping malls or convenience stores: or round housing estates: the walking wounded of the welfare state, queuing for their instant, illusory fix of hope.

For the scratchcard punter, the chances of a big, life-transforming win are only marginally better than of marrying Antea Turner. The odds on a small win are rather better, but only if you define a win as getting your money back.

Now the signs are that some of the sheep are no longer willing to be shepherded to market. Sales of scratchcards have been sliding for months and are now well below £20 million a week and probably anchored there.

Camelot, the lottery operator, has overreacted with a rush to produce a range of products to support flagging card sales. As a result, the public is baffled by all the new games on offer, and turned off by the decision to limit some prizes while holding the initial stake money at a pound.

There is also the threat of rival schemes, some of which pay money direct to charities rather than routing it all through the cumbersome lottery mechanism. Scratchcards are like any new and unexpectedly profitable market, whether in gambling or

alcoholic lemonade. More opportunists than the trade can support will always be dragged in until a process of Darwinian selection strips out the non-performers from the survivors.

There is something especially pernicious about Instants scratchcards, though. The product, and its yobbish advertising, is carefully aimed at what are politely known as the C2s and Ds, that section of society least able to afford gambling and least intellectually capable of appreciating the awful length of the odds against winning.

But it is the form of this particular fix that is most disturbing. Failure demands another try, and the instant nature of the scratchcard allows one. Millions may lose every week on the on-line lottery, but the delay between placing the bet and learning of the loss limits the amount wagered. Some gamblers may go in too heavily, but for most families it has become a comfortable weekly ritual.

By contrast, most retailers can tell stories of compulsives who spend far more than they can afford on scratchcards, and come

back every week. Camelot is now considering the results of a pilot scheme running since October that has put the on-line lottery and the cards into a selection of pubs. This misbegotten scheme seems to have attracted little public criticism, so an extension looks likely.

The extraordinary success of the lottery, and the strong performance for on-line sales even on weeks without a rollover, suggest that the fall-off in scratch cards will not harm the fortunes of Camelot and its members. But that decline, although it may be too little and too late, is to be welcomed nonetheless.

Tied up in legal bonds

□ IT IS a mere coincidence that sees two books on Nick Leeson appear just as aggrieved bondholders in Barings are launching fresh legal action against the bank, but it is an unhappy coincidence all the same. Revelations like those in *The Times* on Monday, that some £80 million or more of the bonuses

paid to Barings managers and executives were based entirely on non-existent "profits" booked by the energetic if misguided Leeson, can only fan the flames. The re-emergence of the Leeson visage, with or without reversed baseball hat, on the front pages will do little for the bondholders' blood pressure.

ING, the Dutch purchasers of Barings, must have known all along that the numbers those bonuses were based on were phoney, but they presumably felt payment was a necessary part of the total bill for buying the bank. It does not take a financial genius, or even the Bank of England, to realise there was going to be something dubious about Barings' 1994 accounts.

The bondholders have, ostensibly, three sets of targets. They want to sue the three main executives at Barings, the three City institutions who managed the bad issue, and they will also have a go at the two Barings companies now in administration, to lever themselves up the list of priority creditors.

They are looking for £109 million plus costs. In the above order, the three executives do not have £109 million. ABN Amro Hoare Govett, RZW and Cazenove do, but so unexpected and shocking was the collapse of Barings that it hardly seems reasonable to expect them to have foreseen it when putting together the prospectus for the issue in January 1994. They can be expected to put up a strong defence. Barings plc and Baring Brothers are bust, so there is no money there either.

The bondholders' true target is ING. The hope must be that the Dutch, wearying of the endless bickering, will come up with a few million of "nuisance money" to add to the hundreds of millions ING has already spent on Barings. The Dutch might,

and put some money the way of the preference shareholders as well. But their legal obligation to find the cash looks doubtful.

What cost the franc fort?

□ QUELLE horreur, quelle confusion. Who would be a Frenchman, trying to make sense of his country's economic predicament? Denis Kessler, head of the French equivalent of our Confederation of British Industry, tied himself in knots yesterday in an attempt at a rational analysis.

Constant announcements of new tax increases destabilise households and companies. Measures to boost economic growth have undermined confidence. He wants state-directed growth financed with debt – but moans about the budget deficit. Production is stagnating, unemployment is rising, pay is too high, investment is too low.

Emerging from this *bouillabaisse* of complaints, however, is one certainty. However dire the economy, the franc must not be

allowed to depreciate. Only a rapid move towards a single currency will provide conditions for lasting growth, he says.

Imagine Britain were still in the exchange-rate mechanism. The recession is deepening, unemployment and repossessions are soaring – and the CBI begs the Chancellor, nay, prays for a thumping great rise in interest rates. Only thus do you have a measure of the strange sickness that seems to have overtaken the French psyche.

M Kessler's outpourings could not have been in greater contrast to those from across the border. Hans-Olaf Henkel, his German equivalent, said his members would not support a single currency unless it could be proved to promote stability. Perhaps Herr Henkel can offer M Kessler some free counselling.

Tangled cables

□ BICC is well ahead of the field for this year's Bad Timing award after announcing an £11 million expansion for its Singaporean cables business just as a local subsidiary was being barred from public contracts after bribery allegations. A couple of years ago, BICC had the misfortune of becoming tangled up in the scandal over the Pergau dam, in neighbouring Malaysia. As Lady Bracknell might have put it....

Apple puts dividend payments on ice

BY RICHARD THOMSON
IN NEW YORK

APPLE Computer, the world's second largest desktop computer company, has suspended dividend payments because of mounting losses.

The move underlines the depth of the problems besetting Apple, which has suffered a series of big setbacks over the past few months.

Apple reported a \$69 million loss in its first financial quarter and last week gave a warning that losses in the second quarter would be even bigger as it pays the price of strategic errors that have left it isolated, with a shrinking market share and a demoralised workforce.

Gil Amelio, who took over as chairman and chief executive after a boardroom shake-up two weeks ago, is struggling to put together a new strategy to restore public confidence in the company while keeping it independent.

The dividend decision was well received in the stock market. The shares rose 50 cents in early trading to \$28.75.

The company said yesterday that profit margins would remain under pressure and be below the level of previous years because of intense pricing pressures. Apple blamed increased competition, compressed product life cycles and the need to reduce stocks.

Apple has been forced to discount its desktop computer heavily to protect its market share. It has looked hard for a merger partner, but negotiations with Sun Microsystems were aborted.

CACORN Computer Group, the UK computer technology company that is majority-owned by Italy's Olivetti computer group, and Apple Computer UK are forming a £5 million joint venture company to develop IT solutions for the UK education markets.



Sir David Simon, left, BP's chairman, and John Browne, chief executive, after announcing record profits yesterday

BP results set record but pump wars hurt growth

BY CARL MORTISHED

PRICE competition at the petrol pump is keeping a check on profits growth at British Petroleum. Yesterday, the oil company reported its largest annual profit of £2 billion for 1995, compared with £1.48 billion in 1994, but weak refining margins and price wars at the pump caused a sharp fall in profits from downstream activities.

BP's 36 per cent advance in replacement-cost profit comes before a £709 million charge in the fourth quarter for restructuring its worldwide refining operations. Last autumn, BP agreed to sell a refinery in Ohio, and in January the oil company announced the closure or sale of another three refineries, in the

US, France and The Netherlands. The company also gave warning of a softening of the chemicals markets.

Sir David Simon, chairman of BP, admitted the trading outlook for refining was grim, with margins at their lowest for 10 years. "There is still overcapacity and that is almost certain to affect margins," Sir David said. BP intended to remain competitive on petrol prices.

BP is raising the final quarter dividend by 4p to 42.5p, a total of 15.25p, up 45 per cent on 1994. Sir David said the profit rise in 1995 was achieved by a combination of self-help and volume increases, claiming the oil company had achieved \$2 billion

of performance improvements ahead of schedule. "I think we are back at the upper end of the oil premier league," he said. "The companies that can show productivity gains are the real players."

BP has had discussions with British Gas over take-or-pay contracts but does not expect an early resolution of the problem. The oil company supplies BG with 600 million cubic feet a per day but John Browne, chief executive, said that the average cost of the BP contracts was 15p per therm, compared with BG's average supply/demand balance.

The chemicals division suffered a downturn in the fourth quarter owing to destocking by customers, with profits sliding from £225 million to £127 million. Profits for the year were a record £844 million because of stronger margins and lower costs. In the near term, BP expects softer margins but hopes prices will pick up later in the year.

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period of 1994, thanks to lower exploration write-offs and in spite of a static oil price of \$17 per barrel. BP expects the oil price to remain within a \$16-18 range but gave a warning of price volatility owing to uncertainty in the supply/demand balance.

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Profits at BOC fuel worries in City

BY ALASDAIR MURRAY

BOC left the City mildly disappointed yesterday in spite of increased first quarter profits of £101 million.

The chemicals company's share price dropped 18p to 925p with the results registering at the low end of expectations. There was also some concern that a fall in US demand for liquid products in December signalled the start of a downturn in its vital US market.

But Danny Rosenkranz, chief executive, said: "The improvement was in line with our expectations and shows pretty strong growth across all our main markets, except in healthcare, which we expected to be flatish."

Overall, turnover rose 11 per cent to £968 million. The gas division turnover rose 9 per cent to £681 million, while profits rose to £94 million. BOC said demand had remained strong in the US throughout the quarter, with profitability on an upward trend, although the pace of increase had slowed. Sales and profits increased in Europe, the Pacific and South Africa.

Profits in Ohmeda, the healthcare division, fell by 10 per cent to £13.5 million in 1995. Tom Mulcahy, chief executive, said that the increase was achieved in a "highly competitive environment" because of improved lending volumes and improvement in credit quality.

Neil Dean, chief financial officer, said that the bank had had a particularly good year in Northern Ireland, where lending through the branches was 25 per cent up on 1994, and overall lending was 15 per cent higher. Growth had come "not so much from the peace dividend" as from benefits of putting AIB technology into TSB branches bought in 1991.

Mr Dean said resurgence in

Safeway trading fails to impress

BY CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

CHRISTMAS trading figures from Safeway failed to cheer the market yesterday. Shares in Argyll, the parent company, were marked down, and some brokers trimmed forecasts. In spite of a like-for-like rise in sales of 8.6 per cent in the 17 weeks to the end of last week.

City concern focused on a dip in gross margin. This margin – which is in the mid 20s – slipped by 0.4 percentage points, the group said, as competitive pricing in the sector bit hard.

A Safeway spokesman also said that the current round of traditional new year price discounting was proving sharper than in recent years.

The group also disclosed that sales early last month had slowed. However, it said that sales were currently more pleasing.

Safeway is rolling out a strategy to stem the erosion of its gross margin, which will

include promotion of its own brands, a greater emphasis on high-ticket non-food items, such as children's clothes, and a greater contribution from technology. The group is planning more use of self-scanning, now on trial in several stores. It says that scanners that enable customers to add up their own baskets and pass through special check-outs speed shopping.

Safeway says that non-food items such as videos and stationery have buoyed the group against fresh food and other perishables, which sell at publishing margins. The chain has also increased sales per square foot by varying its mix. This, it said, had shown room for improvement.

The group is still pursuing its expansion programme and plans to open 17 stores this year and 17 next year.

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Improved lending volumes help lift AIB

BY PATRICIA TEHAN, BANKING CORRESPONDENT

ALLIED IRISH BANKS, Ireland's largest bank, lifted pre-tax profits by 9 per cent, to £137.3 million, in 1995. Tom Mulcahy, chief executive, said that the increase was achieved in a "highly competitive environment" because of improved lending volumes and improvement in credit quality.

Northern Ireland's economy predated the peace process. He said it was too soon to predict effects of Friday's bomb, but added: "We were growing a solid business prior to the ceasefire. We are confident that we can continue that in most of our businesses."

AIB Bank, which includes retail and commercial operations in the Irish Republic, Northern Ireland, Great Britain, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, increased profits by 10 per cent, to £203.9 million. US profits were steady at £109.5 million.

The year's dividend is 17 per cent up, at 12.5p, the final dividend, of 17.7p, up 20 per cent, is payable on May 2.

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SIEMENS NIXDORF

STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Wall Street record run gives London another lift

THE London stock market found the prospect of another cut in interest rates and yet another record-breaking run on Wall Street irresistible.

An early mark-up on the back of a 50-point surge in the Dow Jones average overnight enabled the equity market to claw back some of its recent losses. Despite early volatility in New York during resumed trading yesterday, the FTSE 100 index managed to cling on to most of its gains finishing 21.0 points up at 3,474.6. The total number of shares traded reached 922 million.

Brokers will be anxiously awaiting today's Bank of England inflation report and earnings data for signs of further scope to ease monetary policy.

The City was unimpressed with the latest trading statement from Argyll, the Safeway supermarket chain, despite a 14.1 per cent surge in like-for-like sales. But this failed to mask a further erosion of margins which forced even the company's own broker, Panmure Gordon, to reduce its profit forecast for the current year by £3 million to £40 million. There was also concern expressed about a slow-down in January sales. The shares responded with a fall of 4p to 36p.

Meanwhile, rivals J Sainsbury retreated 3p to 33p, and Tesco 1½p to 280½p with UBS, the broker, said to have turned bearish of the sector.

Burman Castrol continues to build on last week's new found support with the shares adding a further 2p to a new high of £10.64. This stretches its lead during the past week to 78p. Last week Merrill Lynch was singing the company's praises claiming that the break-up value of the group could be as much as £20 a share. Yesterday's gains were triggered by figures from Castrol India, the group's third biggest generator of profits, showing a near 30 per cent increase in lubricant volumes.

Traders reported heavy turnover in takeover favourite Trafalgar House, up 2p at 35p, as a total of 28.6 millions shares changed hands reviving talk again of a break-up bid. Hong Kong Land continues to hold 26 per cent of the shares and has pledged to support the group.

Speculative buying was also good for WH Smith with the



Argyll sales increased but the shares responded with a fall

price adding 7p to 426p on turnover of 1.1 million shares.

NatWest Securities, the broker, is taking a long-term view of some of the companies in the old drinks sector, now renamed alcoholic beverages. It is impressed with the medium-term attractions of both Guinness, 2½p firmer at 480½p, and Grand Metropolitan 3p better at 448p.

Shares in the struggling papermaker that used to trade as Bowater, climbed 1p to 34p. Mercury Asset Management has picked up six million shares this week, stretching its holding to 30 million, or almost 6 per cent. Last year the price traded up to 500p on talk of a bid from Alusuisse, the Swiss group.

NatWest also rates Allied Domecq 1p harder at 523p, where it is looking for the "eventual realisation of value" following recent speculation about a break-up bid.

Dunkin' Business Systems finished 8p lower at 665p as the group placed a total of 17 million shares at 63p. They were placed with US and European investors in the form of American Depository

shares. The placing is expected to raise £128.4 million. Reuters' message to shareholders that it was looking at ways of returning surplus cash to shareholders was good for a jump of 3p to 675p. The group is currently sitting on £800 million of surplus cash and speculation has been mounting in recent weeks that it has been contemplating a

share buy-back operation. It emerged as the international news agency and financial information group unveiled a leap of £89 million in pre-tax profits to £59 million. The main thrust to profits came from Instinet, its computerised share dealing system.

A profits setback in the fourth quarter left BP nursing a fall of 8½p to 536½p. Net profits during the period were issued but brokers are confident it will provide a major boost to profits.

Windsor, the insurance broker, slipped 1p to 20p after some cautious comments to shareholders at the annual meeting.

GILT-EDGE: In the future pit the March series of the long gilt touched £109½p before finishing 1½p better at £109½p as a total of 64,000 contracts were completed. Among conventional issues, benchmark Treasury 8 per cent 2013 rose £2½p to 100¾, while at the shorter end Treasury 8 per cent 2000 was three ticks firmer at 100¼.

NEW YORK: Shares on Wall Street shrugged off an early weakness to resume their upward march. Technology stocks were weak but were pulled off their lowest levels as investors sought the safety of blue chip issues. At midday gains last year on the back of higher chemicals prices, only to see the beginning of a downturn in September.

FALLS: Supercage VR, the virtual reality software group, leapt 75p to 530p on the back of its worldwide distribution deal with IBM. No details of the one-year rolling contract were issued but brokers are confident it will provide a major boost to profits.

BP:

Windfall, the insurance broker, slipped 1p to 20p after some cautious comments to shareholders at the annual meeting.

Three Month Sterling

Previous open interest: 296,736

Volume: 120

Mar 96

Equities close near best of day

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

1995 High	Low	Company	Price 1996	% Chg	Yield %	P/E Ratio
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES						
566 470-Austin Beersmiths	52	-	56.15	+1.5%	-	-
152 470-Brown Ale	52	-	56.15	+1.5%	-	-
153 470-Brown Ale	52	-	56.15	+1.5%	-	-
154 470-Brown Ale	52	-	56.15	+1.5%	-	-
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268 470-Brown Ale	52	-	56.15	+1.5%	-	-
269 470-Brown Ale	52	-	56.15	+1.5%	-	-
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On Valentine's Day, Rachel Kelly looks at some unusual places that are licensed to hold civil marriages

A quiet spot to tie the knot

Where can you say "I will" these days? Until last April, the answer was only in a church or register office. Now ceremonies can be held in any licensed building in England and Wales, thanks to amendments to the Marriage Act first introduced by Gyles Brandreth, MP for Chester, as a Private Member's Bill. You can even plough your troth at Manchester United football ground.

There has been much talk of the more exotic locations where wedding parties can toast the bride and groom: Pinewood Studios, London Zoo, the Brighton Pavilion, a James Bond theme pub in Warwickshire called 007 and, naturally, licensed to wed. Stately homes have cashed in too. Eastnor Castle, the seat of the Harvey-Bathursts in Herefordshire, Castle Ashby in Northamptonshire, home to the Marquess of Northampton, and Powerham Castle near Exeter, home of the Earl of Devon, will all take the wedding shilling.

But a quieter revolution has been taking place in the nation's small farmhouses, cottages, bed-and-breakfasts and country houses. Homeowners are realising that allowing couples to tie the knot in their front room is a nice earner.

Every year more than 350,000 people marry. More than half choose a civil wedding. There is no longer a residency restriction on civil marriages. And there is ready-made advertising provided by local register offices which provide a list of licensed venues.

Not everyone wants the formal-

ity of a hotel, preferring the intimacy of a place like Trevigoe farmhouse, near Bude in Cornwall. Cosier venues typically appeal to second-timers. Janet Croker and her daughter-in-law, Cayle, host the civil ceremony, conducted by a visiting registrar, and the reception in Trevigoe's dining room; larger parties of up to 30 can use the barn. Mrs Croker assures couples that "the Bude registrars conduct the ceremony very sensitively".

The joy of the wedding business, says Mrs Croker, is its predictability. Like most of those taking advantage of the legislation, Mrs Croker was already involved in small-scale catering, serving cream teas and lunches at the farmhouse.

"But lunches in particular are unpredictable. It's terribly difficult because one day you may have to lay off staff, the next you are rushing around. With weddings you know in advance." Mrs Croker charges a £100 booking fee, and catering per head on top.

"We have been inundated with inquiries," she says. "I would advise other homeowners thinking of getting involved that they must be ready to let their home be taken over. You must be enthusiastic about the whole process because it is someone else's special day." She also had to pay a £1,000 fee to the local council to become licensed.

Council fees for civil marriage licences vary. Westminster charges £475 to license a room that holds 100, plus £50 per extra room. For rooms holding 100 to 500 people the charge is £500 plus £50 per extra room. Each licence



Kim Fletcher wanted to capture that country atmosphere for her wedding and chose Sandhole Farm in Cheshire

Getting married in the country

60. A conservatory in the main house is a second option as both areas are licensed.

The Worths applied to Cheshire Council for a £250 licence and had to give notice in the local paper outlining their plans.

is valid for five years and it is then reviewed.

Applying for a licence can be a lengthy process. Some councils require homeowners to submit an application form to include details of floor plans and all facilities. This is dispatched to surveyors, planners, the fire brigade and any other public service in order that recommendations can be made.

Weddings have to take place under cover in a room or set of

rooms, therefore excluding the use of bandstands, gardens or ruins. The house must be open to the public at the time of the wedding, although no other function must be going on in the vicinity of the room where the marriage is taking place. The property in which it takes place must have no religious connotations. The ceremony is conducted in front of a superintendent registrar, and the solemnity of marriage must be maintained.

Those interested in buying a property with a licence might consider Miskin Manor, near Cardiff, one of the first hotels to

be granted a licence following the 1995 Act. It is for sale through Knight Frank with a guide price of £2.5 million and boasts 32 "exceptional" bedrooms and a leisure club.

• Sandhole Farm, Hulme Waifield, Congleton, Cheshire (0260 224119). • Trevigoe, Crickington Haven, Bude, Cornwall (01840 230418). • Lillington Associates (0171 73377). • Dream Weddings, published by Signer, £5.99.

Home is where the heart is

Valentine's Day presents come no more generous than buying a love-nest. Here is a round-up of some of the finest romantic hideaways:

• Westbere Court, in the village of Westbere, near Canterbury, in Kent, is for sale for £168,000 through Cluttons (01277 457441). This Grade II listed farmhouse dates from the late 17th century and was originally built as a dower. It sports a large brick heart inset in the eastern end of the wall.

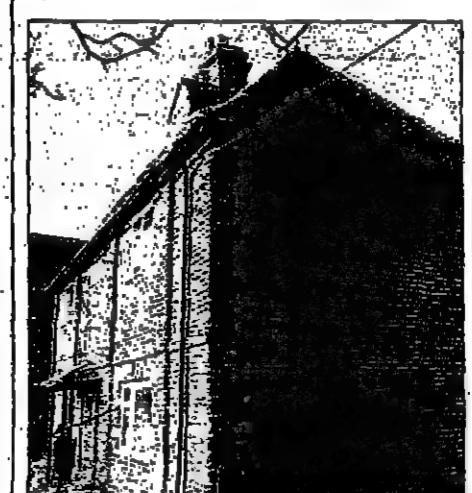
• Cound Hall, near Shrewsbury, is a Queen Anne Grade I listed house on sale for £750,000 through Knight Frank (0171 629 3171). It stands in 94 acres of romantic parkland with adjacent farmland; it has a five-acre lake, mature woodland and a walled garden. Allegedly, it was once the home of Dame Barbara Cartland.

• Myrtle Cottage, in West Buckland, near Kingsbridge, south Devon is for sale for £79,500 through Marchand Petit (01548 857588). This semi-detached thatched cottage lies in a peaceful valley just inland from the sea, and comes complete with exposed stonework and beams, and a large raised stone fireplace with bread oven. Both double bedrooms provide views across the valley from the window seats.

• The handsome Corderries and Weaving Barn near Stroud in Gloucestershire, on the north bank of the Golden Valley, consists of a six-bedroom stone listed village house and an adjoining cottage. "The Weaving Barn", in 1.5 acres of grounds, is on sale through Hampton (01285 654535) for £465,000.

• Nappa House, near Newmarket, Suffolk is on sale for £300,000 through Bidwells (01223 848424). The Grade II listed, detached, thatched, early 19th-century cottage has cast iron lattices to the ground-floor windows.

RACHEL KELLY



Westbere Court was built as a dower

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■ HERITAGE

A flood of good ideas to bring life back to the Thames — but all depends on John Gummer



■ MUSIC 1

Rachmaninov's music tests the conducting craft of the young Russian Mikhail Pletnev

THE TIMES ARTS

■ MUSIC 2

... while at the Barbican Myung-Whun Chung powers the LSO through a Czech night



■ TOMORROW

How is Paul McCartney's new 'Fame' school doing? We sit in on lessons at the Liverpool Institute

Making more of the Thames is a priority for the millennium. But which schemes are feasible? Marcus Binney reports

How to revive London's river

You hear the call on every side. London's great millennium project must be the revival of the River Thames. There is a frenzy of projects for building new bridges and new Thames landmarks, as well as reviving old ones. Some of the biggest names in British architecture are involved. The question is, will anything be done? It all depends on one man:

John Gummer, the Secretary of State for the Environment, who, wearing his hat as Minister for London, wants to take all the decisions himself. Gummer holds sway by virtue of his power to "call in" planning applications, announce inquiries and decide the outcome — accepting or rejecting his inspectors' recommendations as he sees fit. He has fixed everyone, first

by approving a hotly disputed proposal by Sir Richard Rogers to build a multi-storey apartment block beside Battersea Old Church, thereby alienating en bloc Conservative voters across the river in Chelsea. Then, days later, he announced an inquiry into the proposed Tower Bridge Opera House (which no one had objected to), killing off the project just as Credit Lyonnais had found a private investor to

finance it.

In the giddy Eighties, developers accepted inquiries as a matter of course. Today people simply back away. The Royal Opera House reckoned it would add a minimum of a year and £100,000 to the bill.

Almost all current Thames projects are potentially contentious and candidates for ministerial intervention. For example, the architect Will Alsop has a daring plan to move the ICA from the Mall to a gallery constructed on the columns of old Blackfriars railway bridge. Beside it, he proposes a glass canopy over the modern railway bridge, ingeniously transforming it into a station serving both sides of the river. But the new station, although transparent, could interrupt views of St Paul's Cathedral. Similar objections could be made to all the proposals for elegant pedestrian bridges, such as Richard Horden's ingenious scheme for an inhabited bridge from Bankside to St Paul's, and to Sir Michael Hopkins' ingenious scheme for a cable car across the Thames from Covent Garden to the Festival Hall.

If the whole Thames initiative is not to be hamstrung, we need some smaller projects.

One of the best additions to the

Thames is the Buddhist pagoda built by visiting monks on the Battersea Park promenade. Why not a series of intriguing and colourful landmarks on this scale? They would be the modern-day equivalent of the towers and follies in 18th-century parks and the arches erected to celebrate coronations. They could be built on temporary licences. If the public liked them, they could stay. Hopkins has another good thought on these lines — for pontoon gardens floating on the river in front of Somerset House and The Temple. If the first was a success, more could be built, with bars and cafés.

There provide some of the most beautiful views along the river. Stand in the middle of Albert Bridge and you would hardly know you were in London. Splendid mature trees line both banks until the

Thames curves out of sight. Turn around, and the trees continue on the north side, but not on the south side where there is a dismal cluster of apartment blocks. Build a new embankment wall here, no more than 15 feet or so high, and another stretch of the Thames could be green for centuries to come.

We need to bring the Thames to life at night. Albert and Tower Bridges are superbly lit, but much of the river is dark at night. A few lights shining down on the water from a new pedestrian bridge would give Londoners a glimpse of the teeming fish we never see. And think what a sculptor such as Michael Pye, who designed the waterfalls of the British Pavilion at the Seville Expo, could do with choreographed vertical jets of water lit by changing coloured lights.

In previous centuries, there was a fantastic amount to see on the Thames. "Such a forest of masts for miles together that you think all the ships of the universe here assembled," said Tobias Smollett.

The key issue is how to revive the water traffic. "Regular passenger services are not feasible," says David Jeffrey, chief executive of the Port of London Authority. "It is not possible to make the Thames semi-tidal or non-tidal above the Thames Barrier. It would flood London. You would lose all the fish and the wildlife in and on the river. Strong stuff. But others are not so sure.

Maldwin Drummond, author of the visionary plan for a new high-masted royal yacht, points out that the narrow arches of old London Bridge acted as a weir, leaving calmer water above and below. "Read Pepys and you will see that

most people got out of their boats at London Bridge and let the watermen plunge through, then got in on the other side," he says.

A key question is whether devices such as fish ladders could be used to keep the river alive. "At the moment the tide is too fast for a waterbus service," says Drummond. "Going down to Greenwich on the ebb and returning on the flood does not provide a proper timetable."

In the year 2000 there is the exciting possibility of holding the Lord Mayor's Show on the Thames. The City's livery companies can bring the river to life with pageantry. This year Drummond becomes Prime Warden of the Fishmongers' Company. He says: "Six companies should be racing on the Thames this summer with newly-built cutters — 30ft gigs which can be converted into ceremonial barges with canopies."

Everything depends on reconciling genuine concerns for wildlife with the opportunity to make renewed use of this once great highway. With millennium celebrations in prospect at Greenwich, whether or not the official festival is held there, the Thames could be alive again with boats.

A ride in a waterbus or water taxi should be as much part of a visit to the capital as catching a red double-decker or hailing a black cab. London's river traffic was once as bustling, varied and colourful as that of Venice or Istanbul. The city has a very long way to catch up, but that is all the more reason for starting now.

A lecture on The Potential of the Thames will be held at 6.30pm tonight in Westminster Central Hall, SW1 (0171-333 3721)

CONCERTS: Spirited Prokofiev; Pletnev proves himself; a Janáček Mass

Alive and kicking

BBC SO/Gelmetti
Festival Hall

Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony in B Flat — along with the *Classical*, his best-known — was written in a short space of time in the summer of 1944, although some of its material dates back to the previous decade.

Much was expected of the composer's victory over Germany was imminent, and the audience that gathered for the premiere in Moscow, in January 1945, was hoping for an unequivocal expression of national pride and optimism.

What Prokofiev gave them was certainly uplifting — he himself said that he conceived the work as "glorifying the human spirit". But, being Prokofiev, it was anything but unequivocal.

A convincing performance of the symphony has to catch that characteristic glint of irony: there is nothing strictly comparable to the forced rejoicing of Shostakovich's Fifth, but there needs to be a constant awareness of the tensions simmering beneath the surface.

Gianluigi Gelmetti's performance with the BBC Symphony Orchestra last Thursday

BARRY MILLINGTON

GERALD LARNER

Spirited canter through Czech mass

Having survived the fracas at the *Opera Bastille* in Paris that brought his departure after a five-year stint as its music director, Myung-Whun Chung has been busily spreading his wings further afield. His migrations among the top international orchestras brought him to London for two concerts with the London Symphony Orchestra, of which the first found him unusually at home in a programme of two Czech masterpieces.

This operatic experience came to the fore in Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass*, no longer an oddball curiosity, but an admired classic. The dramatic character of this Slavonic mass expresses a white-hot conviction in the Christian faith, less as a liturgical devotion than a festive celebration. The Korean conductor generated the

requisite spirit in a keen blend of voices and orchestra.

The London Symphony Chorus, with Malcolm Hicks as guest chorus master, voiced no inhibitions about getting their tongues around the original text, but the thunderous amplification of the long organ solo near the end was less to be welcomed than Catherine Edwards' virtuous playing of it.

Vocal solos in the work are oddly dispropionate, but the Slovakian soprano Andrea Dankova from the National Theatre in Bratislava, who is

Russian on the way up

CBSO/Pletnev
Symphony Hall,
Birmingham

Mikhail Pletnev's concert with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra was well timed. Just when the audience in Symphony Hall was wondering where the next brilliant young conductor was coming from, here was a vivid demonstration that such musicians do exist. By the time the present music director's contract expires in two years' time, Pletnev will be the same age as Sir Simon Rattle is now, and perhaps even capable of carrying on where he leaves off — although in a Russian-oriented direction.

These observations are intended neither as prophecy nor as advocacy. With a few distinguished exceptions, Russian conductors tend to be less convincing outside their national repertoire. While Pletnev the pianist is not limited in this way, Pletnev the conductor has emerged in the last two or three years largely on the strength of his interpretations of Russian music. On this occasion with the CBSO he was conducting Tchaikovsky.

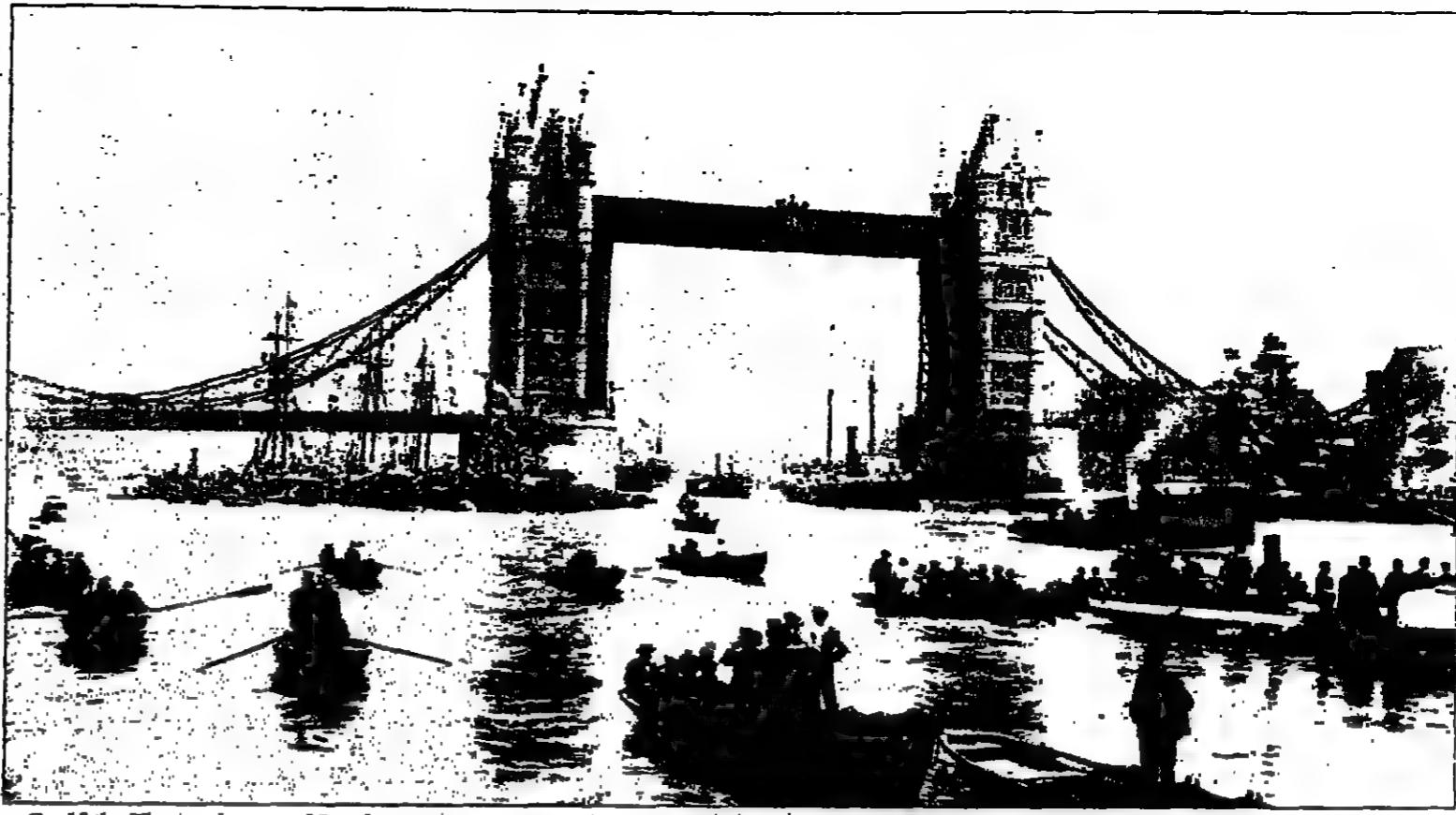
NOEL GOODWIN

**ISO/Chung
Barbican Hall**

expected at Glyndebourne in 1997, made an impressive British debut with a voice of lyrical fullness. She was matched for fervour by the Russian tenor Sergei Larin, while Amie-Marie Owen and Stephen Richardson contributed the shorter mezzo and bass solos to expressive effect.

An edge to the orchestra's string tone was more acceptable in the Mass than in Dvorák's D major Symphony (No 6) which preceded it. Chung drove this forward at a brisk pace, although he seemed content to express only what was obvious on the surface, except in the trio of the scherzo movement where the application of a finer brush disclosed more of the inner detail.

NOEL GOODWIN



Could the Thames in central London once more carry a bustling riverboat trade, as it did when this late 19th-century photograph was taken?

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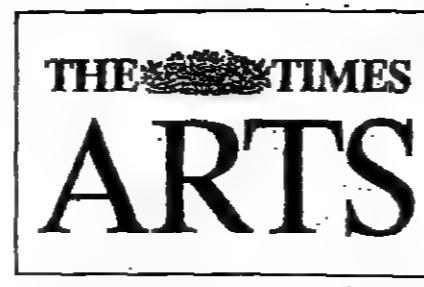
■ FILMS

Shakespeare the Hollywood way: Kenneth Branagh defends his part in the new *Othello*



■ VISUAL ART

The inspiration for a thousand tea towels: eccentric tributes to Constable's *The Cornfield*



■ OPERA

Jonathan Miller provides a quizzical kind of staging for Handel's superb *Rodelinda*



■ POP

A veteran talent returns: Kiki Dee turns in a performance of admirable depth and passion

Away win for Handel fans

■ OPERA

Rodelinda
Blackheath
Concert Halls

THE main hall was packed to the gunwales for Monday's semi-staged performance of Handel's opera, which must have given the driver of the last train back to town a nasty shock — a platform filled to overflowing suggested a football match that no one had warned him about.

Opera-goers are of course better behaved than most football supporters, but only just. The evening started with some aggro from the crowd when the conductor, Nicholas Kraemer, drew attention to the libretto printed in the programme and then someone doused the lights. Angry protests from the stands, the lights came up again and we could all follow the text in authentic 18th-century style.

Jonathan Miller's semi-staging was minimalist. The singers in evening dress, all of whom had their roles by heart, sat at a table groaning with bottles of (I trust) mineral water, rose when required to take part in the action and looked on with varying degrees of interest when not. You knew someone was a wrong 'un when he sang an aria with his hands in his pockets.

Rodelinda (1725) comes from one of Handel's great periods, immediately after *Giulio Cesare* and *Tamerlane*. As so often, you spend the first act thinking what a jolly good opera composer he was. Then, in the second and third, he throws aria after aria at you of such prodigious musical invention and dramatic insight that you realise he was beyond doubt one of

RODNEY MILNES

Wheeling and able

■ DANCE

CandoCo
Queen Elizabeth Hall

EACH performance by CandoCo is remarkable: wheels spinning, chairs spiralling like bicycles, people balancing on one leg or one hand. This may sound like a bunch of circus acrobats, but CandoCo actually consists of able-bodied and wheelchair-using dancers.

CandoCo owes its success not just to novelty: its performers are talented and have a repertoire of a calibre conventional companies should seek to emulate. Rather than suffocating creativity, the physical restrictions and wheelchairs seem to have stimulated more choreographers to an inspired inventiveness.

This rule holds firm with the handsome new piece, *You Are Now Entering the State of Love*, shown as part of CandoCo's two sold-out London performances. Lea Parkinson, one of the company's male dancers, has devised an imaginative duet for Sue Smith and David Tool.

The piece begins with images of the heavens, the sea and the remarkably broad hands which — for those familiar with CandoCo — belong unmistakably to Tool. When John Henderson's sensitive lighting plot brightens the stage, Tool's singular

NADINE MEISNER

shape becomes evident, offering the illusion of being half-sunk into the stage because he has no lower limbs. His long, powerful arms sweep sideways with the dramatic breadth of an eagle's wingspan, enabling him to walk, twist and balance in extraordinary feats of virtuosity.

Lea Parkinson partnered the wheelchair-bound Celeste Dandeker in Darshan Singh Bhuller's *Once Upon a Time in England* and most of the company assembled for their popular energiser, *Back to Front With Side Shows* by Elmyn Claid.

In this scheme, Tool is the centre, with his vivid, significant glances and blazing physical prowess. The muscular effort, though, has taken its toll and he is retiring to start a film career. With so many pieces tailored to his unique abilities, his departure will leave CandoCo with a gaping hole in its repertoire.

BRAHMIN

IN THE spring, a Theatre Club member's fancy turns to thoughts of getting away from it all for a weekend of fun and entertainment. From May 3 to 5, the first club excursion of the year will take members to Cambridge, for two evenings of opera. After an early dinner at the University Arms, it's off to English Touring Opera's production of Massenet's romantic tragedy, *Werther*. After breakfast on Saturday morning there is a visit — by punt! — to the picturesque village of Grantham, setting for Rupert Brooke's famous poem *The Old Vicarage* (now home to Lord Archer). Near to the Old Vicarage are the incomparable Orchard Tea Gardens, where Stephen Medcalf, ETO's director of productions, will join you to give a talk about Saturday evening's opera, Verdi's magnificent *Rigoletto*. The weekend finishes after breakfast on Sunday.

The all-inclusive price of £192 per person includes best seats for both operas with complimentary programme and a glass of wine in the interval, and two nights' dinner, bed and breakfast. To book, telephone 01223 351241.

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Moor sex and violence



Central figures in "a relationship that produces violence": Desdemona (Irene Jacob), Othello (Laurence Fishburne) and Iago (Kenneth Branagh)

Kenneth Branagh tells Martyn Palmer why he is happy to star in an *Othello* described by its director as an 'erotic thriller'

To the purist, cinematic treatment of any one of Shakespeare's plays may seem like a crime, not unlike turning the Globe Theatre into a Disney theme park. But to Kenneth Branagh, who has more or less made a career out of demystifying, resuscitating and reinterpreting the works of the Bard for mass consumption, it is what the man himself would have wanted.

If Shakespeare were alive today, Branagh suggests, he would be perched high in the Hollywood Hills, penning his latest script directly for the cinema screen. "He would probably be on the Internet too," Branagh says.

It is true that many of the plays have all the elements of a contemporary blockbuster.

Little wonder, then, that Hollywood producers are jostling to turn out Shakespeare films in unprecedented quantities: currently there are three *Romeo and Juliet* productions, Branagh's own *Hamlet*, two versions of *Richard III* and a Quentin Tarantino adaptation of *Macbeth*. The latter should be a special treat for Shakespearean scholars.

But Branagh contends that none is more appropriate to cinematic treatment than *Othello*, with its themes of love, murder, jealousy, betrayal and racism. Forget the tragedy tag; its director, Oliver Parker, is now happy to sell *Othello* to audiences on the basis that it is an "erotic thriller".

Branagh, who has produced, directed and acted in screen versions of *Henry V* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, this time confines his contribution solely to performance: he plays the villain Iago with charm-coated malice. He does not balk at the director's description of the latest *Othello* any more than he does at what others might perceive as the bastardisation of the Bard's work.

In the new film version *Othello* comes with 60 per cent of the original text cut away and new scenes added: very different from the classic Olivier film, which remained heavily anchored in a stage production. But the new movie remains a period piece, beautifully filmed at the lush locations

of Venice and Bracciano Castle to the north of Rome, but with a contemporary flavour.

The \$11-million production, funded by an American company, only got the green light when Branagh's bankable name was attached to it. But Branagh says that this new *Othello* is very much Parker's vision. He is the son of the former British Rail boss Sir Peter

Parker; his brother

Nathaniel plays

the tragedian

Oliver Parker

</

Wigan's shock fails to register on Richter scale of life

I don't understand it. The sun rose in the east this morning. The rain fell down, not up. The Earth continued on its course around the sun. Dinosaurs remained extinct, fire remained hot and ice cold; beer was still good, men and women continued to look on each other with favour, children continued to be born. Life in short carried on.

And yet it happened. Wigan really did lose a match in the rugby league Challenge Cup. No Cup final at Wembley, no lap of honour, no modest triumphism in the post-match interviews. My father, Wigan-born, will not, on April 27, be modestly accepting the obvious fact that it was all really down to him.

Wigan won the Cup last year; they always win the Cup. The last time they lost a Cup match was in

February 1987 and, in the immortal words of Sam Goldwyn, we have all passed a lot of water since then.

Ah, 1987, when Margaret Thatcher and Mike Tyson were both unbeatable; both determined to go on and on and on and no one could see an end to either of them.

Nelson Mandela was in prison and there was this curious wall right down the middle of Berlin. Both seemed certain to stay in place for our lifetimes: the prospect of change was not even to be considered.

Terry Waite vanished and we never thought we would see him again.

Things change fast in the world, but, in sport, you get a revolution every season, because sport is real life on fast forward. For example, when Wigan lost their last Cup match, England had the second-

best cricket team in the world. They had just beaten Australia in Australia to retain the Ashes under the captaincy of Mike Gatting. Chris Broad topped the Test averages and England's strategy was based around spinners, Phil Edmonds and John Emburey.

In Oxford, there was a thing called the Boat Race. Mutiny, which was supposed to be the end of the Boat Race as we knew it. Yet Oxford still won and did so for the next three years.

Everton won the League: this fact alone is enough to give every footballing person that dizzying sense of the pure vertigo that only the sporting timescale can implant. Coventry were the FA Cup, Tottenham in the final. Ian Rush was transferred to Juventus for the huge sum of £1.2 million: he was confidently expected to set the

Italian league on fire and catapult the Continent into a new era of respect for English football.

Pat Cash won Wimbledon and was going to rule tennis for the next decade. He never won it

again. Martina Navratilova won the women's from Steffi Graf. Could anyone ever beat Martina? Next year Graf did the grand slam.

Meanwhile, the people who really know about sport told us that the America's Cup was to be its next great global event, it would match Formula One for audience power and pure distilled sexiness. Peter de Savary — remember him? — in a vulgar hogo of Bollinger and Havana, launched a new challenge that was going to take the world by storm.

This was the year of the first rugby union World Cup, an event that seems to have been with us throughout all eternity. The rugby establishment here rather pooh-poohed it. Huh. It will never catch on. New Zealand won from France in the final. This was also

the year of the second world athletic championships, an occasion on which the touching innocence of the first was effortlessly lost. The long jump result was fiddled by the organisers and the only Briton to win gold was Martina Whitbread.

As for me, I was researching for my second book, about a year in the life of a racing stable. Thus I watched the horses with John Dunlop and charted his rise above a sea of sorrows. A great man, actually. Reference Point won the Derby, in a thoroughly workman-like way and the sporting year continued, setting Gating on his collision course with Shakoor Khan.

Sport changes with lightning speed, champion succeeding unbreakable champion with bewildering inevitability, an endless chain of matchless heroes brusquely humbled, of unknowns rising to the heights, each preparing the way for his own fall. Yet when exactly will the fall come? That, for the great ones — that, even for Wigan — is the only relevant question of sport.

England's rugby union wing, Mike Harrison, said after receiving only two passes in a five-nations' championship game (Rory Underwood, on the other flank, got none): "We had been practising a more expansive game." Not everything changes.

Indeed. Eight members of the Provisional IRA were shot dead in Northern Ireland, 32 people died in a Tamil massacre of Buddhist priests. The world has changed since 1987 and Wigan's last Cup defeat for nine years; but not enough, alas, not enough.

Gamble on Norman fails to pay dividend

BY COLIN MCQUILLAN

ICL Lion Hearts, leaders of the Super Squash League, went down to their first defeat of the season this week when, calculated, gamble went astray. They persuaded Ross Norman to come out of retirement to supplement their injury-stricken squad against the match against Ogmore Valley Dragons at Maesteg, only for David Evans, ranked No 50 in the world, to beat the former world champion 3-1 in the third-string encounter.

Norman, who retired eight months ago at the age of 37, when still in the world's top ten, had been limited to social squash while concentrating on building up his international courier business.

He started with astonishing assurance, taking the first game 15-10, but was then unable to counter the increasing front-court power of the 20-year-old Welsh champion, who reeled in the match 15-4, 17-15, 15-4.

"We thought Ross might just frighten the youngster enough," John Milton, the ICL team manager, said. "He did play amazingly well for a man who had time for only one serious session of practice after we learned Chris Walker had twisted an ankle playing in the German Bundesliga — but David needed more respect than that."

Craig van der Watt, the South Africa No 1, who bases his European season at the Welsh club, followed Evans's first win of the season with his own sixth victory in six Super League outings, beating Mark Chalonier, the England No 4, promoted to second string in Walker's absence, 15-9, 10-15, 15-1, 15-12.

The league leaders needed the point gained by Del Harris, who beat Mark Cairns 13-15, 14-15, 15-10, 15-7 in the first-string dead rubber match, to stay marginally ahead of Cannons Club, the defending champions.

Cannons defeated Ellis Stockbrokers Lingfield 2-1 in Surrey, Tony Hands relinquishing an important second-string point to Stephen Meads, who won 17-15, 15-13, 14-15, 15-10, but Pete Nicol, the British champion beat Rodney Sykes, the Australian No 1, in straight games in the first string.

LEAGUE STANDINGS: 1. ICL Lion Her 14-6; 2. Cannons Club 13, 3. Oner Valley Dragons 12; 4. Jim Hart Northern 7, 5. Ellis Stockbrokers Lingfield

Hill looks to spin doctors to smooth path to world title

FROM OLIVER HOLT IN ESTORIL, PORTUGAL

THE driving is one thing, the goals clear and uncomplicated. Damon Hill is the favourite for the Formula One drivers' world championship this season: Michael Schumacher, Jacques Villeneuve and Jean Alesi are all there to be beaten. Image is another thing. Not everything, perhaps, but Hill is tackling it this year with a gusto born of deep-seated frustration.

Amid the wreckage of last season, the critics leapt on his body language and a demeanour that often betrayed his despair, as much as they did his unfortunate tangles with Schumacher. Before the year was up, they had him nearly pigeon-holed as the whining successor to Nigel Mansell, the latest in a distinguished line of whingers.

It went around that his mechanics called him Mr Glum. Schumacher said that he was "moody"; everybody said that they wished he would smile more. It all began to build up. The misconception pained Hill almost as much as the loss of the championship. Now, he has hired some doctors of spin, not to try to kick over the traces, hide past misdemeanours or disguise basic character flaws, but simply to allow the real Damon Hill to stand up.

Last night, a few hours after he had driven the new Williams-Renault that should help to bring him the world title this year, Hill sat in a restaurant on the Atlantic coast north of Cascais as huge breakers battered the rocks outside and explained why he has gathered a whole team of back-seat drivers around him.

He has six people working for him, including an image analyst, a public relations

executive, a personal trainer and a commercial manager to allow him to concentrate on grand prix racing, ease the growing burden of being a one-man business and stop him being misunderstood.

Those who know him even as a casual acquaintance see a man with a quiet but sharp sense of humour, a courteous man, unfailingly polite and cooperative and almost totally devoid of the rampant egotism that blights the characters of so many leading sportsmen. They see, too, a depth of thought and a breadth of interests that few of his rivals possess. Those who do not know him see something different.

"You know what I am like and I do not think that comes across," he said. "That is something I want to happen. If I look very serious when I am at race meetings and I get upset when I have not done well, it is because I feel very passionately about what I do, because I have a burning desire to succeed."

"It is absolutely not a case of trying to reinvent myself. I have not changed one bit. There is a great deal of desire

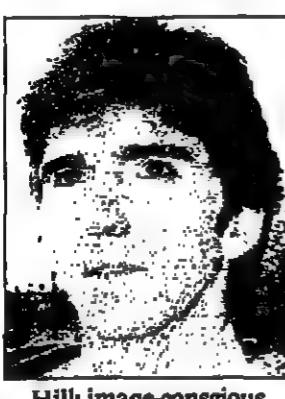
from the people in the UK to see me do well and win the championship, and I would not be able to live with myself if I did not do everything I possibly could to give myself the best shot.

"That includes having the back-up, having the people to look after the off-track side of things. I have always been my own man, but I cannot do it all by myself now. A lot of drivers have management companies and that does not rest easily with me because I like to determine my own fate, but I do need help and support and that is what I have got now. I felt the need to address other parts of the job, like communicating what I do and what I am about. Most of all, I want to show that I am enjoying it, because I do enjoy it."

This season undoubtedly provides Hill with his best chance so far of claiming the drivers' championship that Graham, his late father, won twice. Schumacher is with a new team and doubts surround the reliability of Ferrari's new V10 engine; Alesi, at Benetton, may be a little too impetuous and Villeneuve, Hill's team-mate, will be negotiating his first season after his successes in Indy Cars.

"I don't think I can approach it with the view that I will get another go if I do not win in this year," Hill said. "That would not be the right way of thinking about it. I have got to win it now. I have to give it my best and you can boil that down to every race and to every lap. I have got to drive every lap better than the last one."

If that happens, one suspects, the image will take care of itself.



Hill: image-conscious



Skaardal shows his determination while heading the field at Sierra Nevada. Photograph: Stefano Rella/Dim

Skaardal leads Scandinavian parade

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

ATLE SKAARDAL, of Norway, spearheaded Scandinavian domination of the men's super giant slalom at the world skiing championships in Sierra Nevada, Spain, yesterday. Making his superior technique tell on the difficult early part of the course, he led a parade of skiers from Europe's more northerly outposts who filled five out of the first six places.

A silver medal-winner in the downhill at the 1993 world championships, Skaardal has recorded seven wins in World Cup super giant slalom events, including one this year. His victory, achieved in 1min 21.8sec, crowned a staggering comeback from serious injuries sustained at Gar-

isch in the run-up to the 1992 Olympic Games.

"I was very insecure when I took a look at the course this morning," Skaardal said. "I wasn't sure how to navigate it — but I had a super feeling in the start house and went down without a mistake. I'm very happy. It's a great feeling. I'm going to have a three-course meal tonight with soup, spaghetti and lots of ice cream."

The 2,425-metre course was fast and in near-perfect condition, with bright sun breaking through an hour before the race as dense fog lifted and a light snowfall stopped.

Patrik Jaerbyn, of Sweden, was second in 1min 22.09sec and Kjetil Asmund, of Norway, the world champion in slalom and giant slalom, fin-

ished third in 1min 22.11sec. Janne Leskinen, of Finland, in fourth in 1min 22.37sec and Lasse Kjus, of Norway, in sixth with a time of 1min 22.57sec, were split by the only non-Scandinavian in the top six. Patrick Wirth, of Austria, who was fifth in 1min 22.48sec.

Jacoby was the first to start in a field of more than 90. "I wasn't sure last night with new snow we had, but I think it was an advantage to start in front," he said.

Aasmod was delighted at an apparent upturn in fortunes. "I haven't done very well this year, so if I can get a medal I'm thrilled about it," he said.

Many injured skiers were left to rue their luck. Peter Romagnoli, of Italy, the reigning World Cup super

giant slalom champion, was a disappointment, as was Luc Alphand, of France, World Cup downhill champion.

The super giant slalom was not held at the 1993 championships in Morzine, Japan, because of bad weather, so Stefan Eberhofer, of Austria, carried the burden of regaining champion from 1991 — and found too much to bare, finishing well down on Skaardal.

The distribution of medals excluded members of the strong Austrian and German teams, as had the women's super giant slalom on Monday. They have a two-day break to marshall their resources before the championships resume on Friday with the women's combined down-

hill.

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4.00 BOXING'S NO 1 IN HS HANDICAP (£5,305,70) (12)

1-6 ASHBOURNE 42 (Colin M. Adams) 6-10-9 J. Ward
2-10 LITTLE BRIT 23 (G. J. F. G. P. Ross) 5-5-4 L. Daniel
3-9 EVEREST 20 (J. C. J. Smith) 5-5-4 T. D. Wilson
4-8 PEGASUS 42 (F. H. Connelly) 4-4-3 J. Chisholm
5-7 SHOTTY 21 (D. J. Evans) 4-4-3 S. D. Williams
6-12 STYLING 22 (D. J. Evans) 4-4-3 S. Williams 5-4-3 J. Jones
7-11 WOLFSON 18 (F. J. Hayes) 5-5-4 T. Adey
8-15 MUSCLE 21 (D. J. Hayes) 5-5-4 T. Adey
9-18 RUMBLE 16 (F. J. Hayes) 5-5-4 T. Adey
10-24 PATTY SPARRER 15 (N. J. Ross) 5-5-4 P. P. Murphy
11-21 SPERRY SPENCER 13 (D. J. Ross) 5-5-4 D. McInnes
12-27 CANNONBALL 14 (C. J. Ross) 5-5-4 C. Thomas
13-31 CHOCOLATE LADY 15 (D. J. Ross) 5-5-4 D. McInnes
14-37 SHOTTY THE MUSCLE 17 (D. J. Ross) 5-5-4 T. Adey
15-43 ONE-UP 21 (D. J. Ross) 5-5-4 T. Adey
16-49 HORNIGOLD 20 (P. J. Ross) 5-5-4 P. J. Ross
17-55 WOLFSON STREET 18 (P. J. Ross) 5-5-4 P. J. Ross
18-61 VICTORY COOK 17 (P. J. Ross) 5-5-4 P. J. Ross
19-67 FIGHTING FORTY 14 (P. J. Ross) 5-5-4 P. J. Ross
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62-399 CANNONBALL 14 (P. J. Ross) 5-5-4 P. J. Ross
63-407 RUMBLE 16 (

THE TIMES WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 14 1996

Irish raider can confirm Champion Chase favouritism Sound Man to hit right note

By ROBERT WRIGHT

ON Saturday at Newbury Viking Flagship served notice that he is ready to defend his Champion Chase crown. Today at Ascot the young tender, Sound Man, attempts to confirm his position as favourite to take over the title.

Sound Man has not run since impressively winning the Tingle Creek Chase at Sandown in December and his trainer, Edward O'Grady, is using today's contest to sharpen up his eight-year-old for the Champion Chase.

O'Grady said yesterday: "It

hasn't been easy with the bad

weather recently, but I can't

grumble too much because it's

been the same for everybody.

However, the others have had

races more recently than

Sound Man and they might

have a fitness advantage.

"He won't be at concert

pitch because Cheltenham is

the target, but I certainly

believe he will give a good

account of himself."

With Storm Alert best over

two miles, the main danger to

be Irish raider should be

Douffin, who returns to his

optimum trip after failing to

say in the King George.

However, Sound Man has

gone from strength to strength

this season, winning all four

arts, and it will be a major

surprise if he is beaten.

While Sound Man will start

at prohibitive odds, the other

two televised races are more

open. The Shetley Enterprises

turdle is fascinating, in spite

of only six horses racing from

handicaps proper.

Buckhouse Boy and Ange-

lo's Double are the inform

ones, but are both 9lb out of

the handicap and have yet to

prove that they stay three



Sound Man, winning the Tingle Creek at Sandown, returns to Britain for today's Comet Chase at Ascot

miles. The latter shapes as

though this trip will suit and is

sure to go well.

Hebridian returns to hurdles after failing on his last two starts over fences, while Simpson, Seekin Cash, Bala-

sani and Top Spin have been

better below their best recently.

Sound Man's stable com-

panion, Time For A Run, has

failed to take to fences this

season, and will appreciate the

return to the smaller obsta-

cles. He put up a tremendous performance when third under top weight in last year's Coral Cup at the Cheltenham Festival, and a repeat of that effort would give O'Grady and

Dunphy a valuable double.

The Reynoldstown Novices' Chase has attracted a top quality field and will have a major bearing on the Sun Alliance Chase at the Festival.

St Melion Fairway has been entered for the Gold Cup by

his trainer, David Nicholson, but his form amounts to little so far, and, like prospect though he is, he has much to prove. Ladbrokes' offer of 6-4 this morning is far too short.

Mr Mulligan is favourite in some lists for the Sun Alliance, and has impressed in two starts over fences. He must be respected, but has a 7lb penalty to overcome. He is preferred to Major Summitt, who is also

unbeaten over fences, but

jumped stickily at Sandown last time.

In the top races horses from smaller yards are often overpriced, and that appears to be the case here. John O'Shea's Go Ballistic put up much of his best effort when stepped up in trip over course and distance last time, being collared close home by Hill Of Tullow. Likely to be held up even longer today, Go Ballistic can dent some large reputations.

Swinburn continues to recover

DOCTORS treating Walter Swinburn after his fall at Sha Tin on Sunday warned yesterday against overoptimism in assessing the jockey's condition. Swinburn, 34, is conscious but suffering severe breathing problems, a fluid build-up in the lungs and multiple fractures.

His father, Wally, who flew to Hong Kong on Monday, was quoted as saying Walter could be back in the saddle within months. But Dr Tom Buckley, in charge of the intensive care unit at the Prince of Wales Hospital where Swinburn is being treated, said: "He has had a severe trauma, with multiple fractures, bruised lungs and severe head injury."

"His principal problems relate to the head and chest. Patients with this kind of trauma can be very stable but can then suddenly deteriorate. He is quite stable at the moment, and we are guardedly optimistic."

Swinburn's agent, Graham Green, had more positive news. "According to his father, who saw him today, Walter has improved," he said. "The doctors are taking him off the ventilator and cutting back on his sedation."

Nonetheless, Swinburn will remain in intensive care for several more days.

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

Kelso

Going: soft, heavy in places

1.10am: 2m 110yds (10 runners)

Sri Lankan spectators give vent to their disgust at Australia's World Cup boycott

Match in Colombo passes off peacefully

BY TUNKU VARADARAJAN

IN KEEPING with the build-up to the sixth World Cup, the cricket was secondary. For the record, a combined India-Pakistan "Goodwill XI" defeated a full-strength Sri Lankan side by four wickets yesterday at the Premadasa Stadium in Colombo.

Anil Kumble took four wickets for 12 in a devastating eight-over spell for the combined side. Muthiah Muralitharan, bowling out of sight of the umpire, Darrell Hair, was not thought to have chuck a single off break. Asharuddin captained the visiting team. Intikhab Alam managed it, no one else — and the lively crowd, grateful for the cricket they received, chanted uniformly.

In their fullest throat, 10,000 Sri Lankan supporters gave the Australians the bird, a pattern that may repeat itself in later matches in India and Pakistan. Playing on the Urdu word for "long live", they kept up a raucous cry: "India zindabad, Pakistan zindabad, Sri Lanka zindabad, Australia — very, very bad." There were other chants, too, thanking the visitors for their gesture of solidarity, but there was also this bitter, less amusing one: "Aussie PM is Keating, Australians are cheating."

The overwhelming flavour at the ground, however, was one of carnival. The aim of the exercise — to show the Australians that cricket can still be played in Colombo without risk of bloodstained flannels — was achieved. Yet for cricket lovers, particularly for passionate ones from the sub-continent, the manner of its achievement was as striking as the aim itself.

Had India not been partitioned in 1947, leading to the creation of the new state of Pakistan, its cricket team today would be quite formidable. Not quite as formidable as it might have been in the early 1980s — when Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev, Imran Khan and Javed Miandad were all at their peak — but certainly good enough to be notional favourites for the World Cup which started earlier today.

An attack of Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, Kumble, Mushtaq Ahmed and Manoj Prabhakar would be varied and venomous. Sachin Tendulkar, Azharuddin and Inzamam-ul-Haq would be a stroke-filled trio of which all sides would be envious.

As far as Sohail, Sanjay Manjrekar, Navnay Sidhu, Pradeep and wicket-keeper Rashid Latif would be a bustling supporting cast of



Test players of India and Pakistan, united in common cause, hold a team meeting during a break in play in the Premadasa Stadium. Photograph: Dexter Cruz

Fraser keeps an anxious watch on Cork

Simon Wilde's
WORLD CUP EXTRAS

batmen — and there is the ageing Miandad, an unknown quantity for perhaps the first time in his life. If the Australians, accorded more respect by the bookmakers than by Sri Lankan spectators, are 5-2 favourites to lift the cup in March, this Fantasy XI might be 2-1.

Yet the flight of fancy, propelled by yesterday's game at Colombo, ought not to stop there. How good would an all-time "All India XI" be? Who would be in it? Would it be the equal of all-time England, Australia and West Indies teams? How about this for an all-time India-Pakistan XI? Sunil Gavaskar, "Hardy" Mohammed, Sachin Tendulkar, Javed Miandad, Vinoo Mankad, Imran Khan (captain), Kapil Dev, Farokh Engineer, Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis and Bhaigowd Chandersekhar.

The side, pure fantasy, has also the purest class. It would hold its own — and more — against Mars. The venue? Why Colombo of course!

Scoreboard, page 44

season or two." Fraser, speaking to their television sets this morning as England opened their World Cup campaign was Angus Fraser in Stamford. The Middlesex and England seamer is training daily at his local gymnasium in case one of his former bowling colleagues should break down.

Fraser is particularly concerned about the fitness of Dominic Cork, although not with any sense of *Schadenfreude*. "England have to be careful with Dominic," Fraser said yesterday. "We all know that we have struggled to bowl sides out in Test cricket in recent years, but the worst thing would be to over-use Dominic."

"Since his debut last summer, he has proved himself to be a world-class bowler, but he must be given enough time to rest. We don't want him to pick up an injury that puts him out of the game for a

season or two." Fraser, speaking at a Sports Writers' Association lunch, knows what he is talking about. In the two years after making his England debut in 1989, he was so overworked that he broke down with a badly damaged hip in Australia in 1991, an injury that took him two years to get over.

Fraser is particularly concerned about the fitness of Dominic Cork, although not with any sense of *Schadenfreude*. "England have to be careful with Dominic," Fraser said yesterday. "We all know that we have struggled to bowl sides out in Test cricket in recent years, but the worst thing would be to over-use Dominic."

Since his debut last summer, he has proved himself to be a world-class bowler, but he must be given enough time to rest. We don't want him to pick up an injury that puts him out of the game for a

posting down the discrepancy to the World Cup's status as a "truly world event". The fact is, to win the recent Test series in South Africa, England needed to play well over 25 days to win the World Cup. They must do so for only eight.

Hooper mystery

There were widespread fears that West Indies would be without one of their key players for the World Cup — and so it proved, even when Brian Lara agreed to join the team. But why is Carl Hooper not in it? Few insiders believe the official line that he is worried about his health. There are rumours of domestic difficulties, but one friend believes the problem goes back to long-standing difficulties with the West Indies board over schedules. If the board had agreed to let him rest for two weeks before the tournament rather than train,

he would have gone. He is punched-drunk and has seen his commitments up to 2000 and there is no gap in sight. The board have not been sympathetic to him for several years."

Hooper mystery

The West Indies captain is also believed to be suffering from burn-out. The problem is, Richie Richardson does not know how to relax. Since dropping out of the game through exhaustion in 1994, he has played virtually non-stop and might have been thought ready for a break after the World Cup and a home series against New Zealand — and so he will be, which is why he has signed to play for the Lashings club in the Maidstone Eurosport League. "Richie likes England very much," his agent said, "particularly the London area. He wanted to spend some time over here and have a holiday."

Allcock and Bryant slip up

BY GORDON ALLAN

FOR just over three hours yesterday, the Preston Guild Hall became a province of Cumbria when Stuart Airey and David Taylor, who had no previous experience of the popular bowls rink, beat Tony Allcock and David Bryant 7-4, 7-3, 4-1, 2-7, 7-6 in the first round of the pairs event at the Churchill Insurance world indoor championships.

Allcock and Bryant have won the title six times, were runners-up last year and this is the first time they have failed to reach at least the semi-finals. Airey and Taylor are the English national pairs champions and five coaches of highly-vocal supporters travelled from Cumbria to watch them take on the world's two most famous players.

In a sense, the match was won by a single bowl in the deciding set. Allcock and Bryant, having come back from 0-4 to lead 6-4, held the winning shot an inch behind the jack. Taylor, although unighted, wrestled it out for two shots, Airey drew a third and Allcock missed with his final drive.

David Corkill beat Tony Tong, of Hong Kong, in

straight sets and plays either Andy Thomson, the holder, or Kelvin Kerrow, of Australia, in the second round.

The championship programme features exclusively singles matches until Saturday, when Richard Corsie and Alex Marshall, the reigning pairs champions, meet Wayne Letman and Phil Rowlands, of Wales, to complete the opening round.

Results, page 44

Qatar reward

Table tennis Bradley Billington, the winner of the Welsh Open ten days ago, has been selected by England for the Qatar Open in 12 days time. He will be joined by the England No 1, Matthew Syed, and the Commonwealth men's doubles gold medal-winner, Andrew Eden.

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Withdrawal increases doubts over American teenager's return to tennis

Training injury forces Capriati to delay comeback

FROM ANDREW LONGMORE IN PARIS

JENNIFER CAPRIATI'S first comeback lasted just one match, her second ended before it had even begun at the Stade de Pierre Couleuvre here last night. Two hours before she was due to play in her first tennis match on the women's tour for 15 months, the American pulled out of the tournament with a pulled-up muscle, renewing doubts about her commitment to a full-time return to the game from which she effectively withdrew after the US Open in 1993.

"I have hurt myself so I cannot play," Capriati said, twiddling her earnings but looking fresh and relaxed. "It is very unfortunate because I had come a long way to play and I was looking forward to getting back on the tour. I felt like I was ready, but there is nothing away, and said that nothing in her preparations had made her question her decision. "It has been great to be part of the atmosphere again," she said. "I've missed it a lot. I couldn't wait to get back to see everyone. It's been a long time since I've travelled anywhere and it's been great to come back to Paris again."

"I think all we can do is do what makes us happy. I've missed my time on the tour, I've missed playing ... of taking a break, it's been a long break, but I feel it's still inside. I'm still young and I never

was slightly less than convincing, but if there is something more to the story than the Capriatis are allowing everyone to see, it is hard to get back to see everyone. It's been a long time since I've travelled anywhere and it's been great to come back to Paris again."

In contrast to the extravagant, orchestrated comeback of Monica Seles last year, Capriati has enjoyed relative peace and quiet in Paris. This was a return by the tradesman's entrance, and as near as Capriati could have hoped to anonymity. The decision to return, she said, had not been the result of Seles's success or of Steffi Graf's persuasions, but made of her own free will.

"It was a gradual thing," she said. "I decided to get back to being around tennis, around my dad and my brother, until I got to here. I talked to people who have supported me throughout and I have had the support of my family."

The last time Capriati came to Paris, she reached the quarter-finals of the French Open on the clay courts of Roland Garros. It was late spring then, and though the all-American sweetheart was struggling to live up to the accolades and dollars heaped upon her, there was no sign of the impending fall.

For the next generation of young players, Capriati's decline has been warning. The Women's Tennis Association, which bowed to financial pressures by allowing Capriati to make her debut on the tour at the age of 13, raised the eligibility age for the full tour to 16 to prevent any further accusations that greed had come before common sense.

By a quirk of fate, Martina Hingis, the last to slip through the net at 14, was also on court last night.

For all Capriati's upbeat words, delivered in bouncy tones and with a ready smile reminiscent of the early days of innocence rather than the darker days of disillusion, few would care to predict with certainty whether Capriati really will follow her intentions, or whether this is another and, in its way, inevitable case of stage fright.

The account of the injury

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HILL CALLS ON
SPIN DOCTOR TO
CLEAR ROAD AHEAD

SPORT

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 14 1996

TENNIS

CAPRIATI FORCES
TO DELAY HER
RETURN TO ACTIC

Team doctor's orders could give edge during nail-biting finishes in World Cup

England put accent on preparation

FROM ALAN LEE
CRICKET CORRESPONDENT
IN AHMEDABAD

TO WIN this World Cup will require far more from a team than simple cricketing excellence, as the England players, who launched the tournament early this morning, are rapidly finding out. You have to travel, you have to stay healthy, you have to stay sane and, on the sub-continent, none of them comes easy. Neither, for some, does the management commandment forbidding nail-biting.

For all the fascinations of India, there are, for Western sportsmen, as many frustrations and privations. New Zealand, England's opponents today, have the advantage of



Franklin obituary 19
Rioli warned 44

familiarity after touring India as recently as November. "It feels as if we've only been away for a long training session," Lee Germon, their captain, said yesterday. The England players, several of them virgin soldiers in this part of the world, are having to accustom themselves to an alien way of life.

Their preparation for survival and success has been meticulous: Phil Bell, the team doctor, has seen to that. One of his earliest missions was to identify the nail-biters of the party, the most persistent of whom were Graham Thorpe and Richard Illingworth, and wean them off the habit. They have already grown better fingernails and more permanently avoided illness.

"Prevention is my aim," Bell said. "When the grounds here are watered, it is done with muddy water that may have come straight from sewage drains. Picking up the ball after it has rolled on the grass, then biting your nails afterwards, is a recipe for stomach trouble."



Fletcher, the New Zealand batsman, practises yesterday in front of an unusually large audience before the opening match of the cricket World Cup against England

For similar reasons, Bell insists that the players wash their hands thoroughly whenever they come off the field. He has also issued a list of dietary instructions entirely at odds with the advice he would give in other countries. Fish and salads, the health foods of Europe, must be avoided at all costs, as must ice in drinks.

For the first time, an England team on tour is on constant medication. Each day,

every player must swallow a capsule of an antibiotic that protects them against diarrhoea and other stomach disorders. "Prevention makes far more sense than cure when a bug can knock three or four players out of your team on the morning of a match," Bell said.

Some players take their own prudent precautions, none more than Jack Russell, though in his case the measures are not all specific to India and Pakistan. Russell took his own baked beans and Jaffa cakes to South Africa, too.

"I could live on beans and rice," he said. "Last time I was here, I had steak and chips 35

nights in succession, but I hardly eat any meat now. I certainly won't eat curry. For breakfast and lunch, all I have is bottled water with a carbohydrate powder."

Russell is not complaining. He knows, and others are finding out, that to do so here is self-defeating. Michael Atherton did spend the practice session yesterday bellowing abuse, but that was entirely directed at himself for dropped catches and false strokes. He has a proper, captain's attitude to the tour and is determined that his team should not fall into the mentality of siege and persecution fatally adopted by many previous England sides.

Even the absurdity of the journey, from Calcutta on Monday, which began for England and three other teams at 4.30am and ended at 9pm, brought a philosophical response. While the vagaries of the Indian Airlines timetable indicate that the Cup organisers should have chartered an aircraft, Atherton is wise enough to acknowledge the local acceptance of travel as an essential trial. "The travel days are an irritant, but the teams who face up to them best are halfway to doing well in the tournament," he said.

The manager, Raymond Illingworth, was not so sanguine. "If a football manager was asked to do the three days

we've just had immediately before the first game in a World Cup, he would laugh the organisers out of court," he said. "It may be the same for both sides, but that doesn't make it right." Illingworth, of course, is the man who vowed, in his 1989 autobiography, "India is one country I will never tour." Much has changed since then, but for one perhaps not enough.

When Illingworth said that England had a good draw in the competition, he was not thinking of his social life. All but one of their group games are in alcohol-free Pakistan and the other, the match today, is in the one remaining "dry" state in India. So, if Robin Smith sought a celebratory drink after a fitness test yesterday that confirmed he could stay with the party, he was out of luck.

One man who may have been driven to strong drink, however, was Jagmohan Dalmiya, the harassed controller of Pilcom, the organising committee. India is affronted by the fallings of the opening ceremony on Sunday and Dalmiya is being held responsible. In Calcutta's State Assembly yesterday, a demand was heard for Dalmiya's arrest charged with wasting money. First the Colombo fortiss, now the fury of Calcutta: it may be enough to make Dalmiya bite his nails.

MARTIN BAYFIELD, generally regarded as one of the world's leading lineout forwards over the past two years, was dropped last night by England from the rugby union team that will play Scotland in Murrayfield on March 2. His place will go to the "uncapped" Bristolian, Garath Archer.

Bayfield's demotion, after 31 caps, is part of the selectors' response to the generally disappointing displays by the forwards during this season's championship. With him goes his Northampton colleague, Tim Rodber — for the second time this season — in a back-row reshuffle that sees Leicester's Dean Richards restored once more.

The England player most at risk after the defeat by France and the six-point victory over Wales had seemed to be Mark Regan but the Bristol hooker holds his place and now has Archer, his club colleague, to throw in to. The selectors have identified the lineout problems which have assailed England to lie more with the 6ft 10in Bayfield while the restoration of Richards must surely bring greater tactical nous to the pack.

Archer, 21, has been a regular in the A side over the last year. He first made his name with Newcastle Gosforth but moved south last summer and joined the Army as well as Bristol. At 6ft 6in and 18st 8lb he will prove a formidable scrummaging partner for Martin Johnson but it is his lineout technique which will come under closest scrutiny against the Scots.

This will be the first match of the season which Richards, England's most-capped No 8, starts. He came on as a replacement against France but the pack has missed his authority and it is significant that Ben Clarke, pack leader this season, moves to the blind-side flank to accommodate him.

ENGLAND: M J Carr (Bath), N S Gough (Leeds), W D C Corling (Harlequins, capt), J C Guest (Bath), R Greenwood (London), P J Johnson (London), M J S Dunning (Nottingham), G C Rowtree (Leicester), M P Regan (Bristol), J Leonard (Harlequins), B B Clarke (Bath), M O Johnson (Cardiff), G Anner (Bristol), L B N Daugler (Worcester), D Marshall (Leicester). Replacements: J E S Callard (Bath), P R de Glanville (Bath), K P F Briscoe (Bristol), R G J Davis (Bath), T A K Roche (Northampton).

SUM THINGS UP...

£117 MILLION INVESTMENT...

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TELEPHONE _____

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Wales stick by Twickenham XV

BY DAVID HANDS

Jones, the 6ft 10in Cardiff lock, whose appearance in a television commercial has caused accusations of "cheapening" the national jersey.

More appropriately, Jones and his forward colleagues have taken part in additional scrummaging sessions since the match at Twickenham, when Sowring was conscious that the scrum was not all it should be. Indeed, they have worked so hard against the under-21 squad — who play their Scottish opposite numbers on Friday in Swansea — that Andrew Lewis, the loose-head prop, sustained a cut eye.

The players are keen for success, they are keen to play a running style, but that will take time," Bowring said.

"Even so, we carry that attitude on to the international stage and both teams buy into it. Saturday's could be an entertaining game. We are looking for an expansive, exciting game, but we are also looking to develop a winning pattern."

Seven of the Wales team will be playing their first championship match at Cardiff, among them Arwel Thomas, the Bristol stand-off half, who continues to keep out the experienced Neil Jenkins.

Bowring believes Jenkins, of Pontypridd, who has played only one game in the past nine weeks because of injury, to be ring rusty.

It remains to be seen whether the optimism created by losing only 21-15 to England is justified. It may be argued that, had England been less sterile in their approach, they would have won by far more. On the other hand, Wales

Grimsby refuse Laws' offer to quit

BY DAVID MADDOCK

GRIMSBY Town's preparation for their FA Cup fourth-round replay with West Ham United tonight continued on its eccentric course yesterday, with Brian Laws, the club's manager, offering to resign after his confrontation with his Italian player, Ivano Bonetti. William Carr, the Grimsby chairman, refused the offer.

Bonetti underwent a two-hour operation at St Hugh's Hospital in Grimsby, to repair a fractured jaw and cheekbone and Laws felt such extreme action on the eve of the club's most important fixture in a decade was warranted. "If the chairman thought that the best thing to do was for me to resign, then I would without hesitation," he said. "I am employed by

this club on my footballing ability and if it is felt I have failed in that duty, then I would step down."

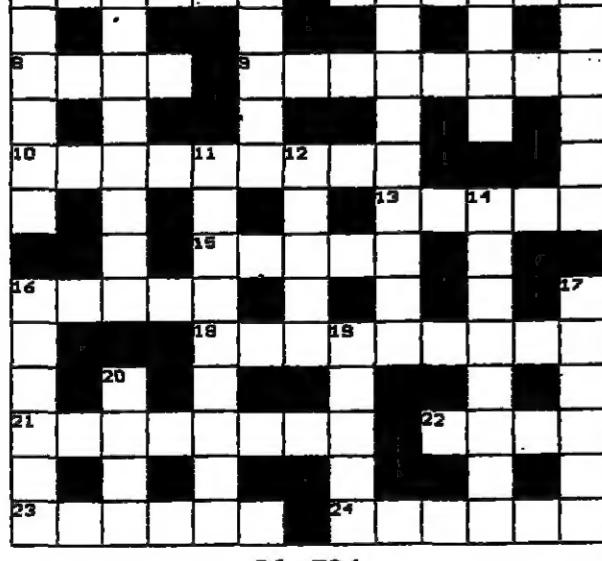
Carr declined and asked instead for support as Grimsby prepare to entertain West Ham. "A lot of things are said in the heat of the moment and they are not taken seriously," he said of the offer to quit. "It is just another episode in the long line of incidents a club chairman has to deal with. I want to put this behind us and concentrate on the very important match ahead."

Bonetti will have trouble concentrating on little else than the pain from a fracture allegedly inflicted by his manager. It came in a dressing-room confrontation after Grimsby's 3-2 defeat at Luton Town last Saturday. The former Juventus player is now contemplating his future

with the club whose supporters raised — through an appeal — the £50,000 needed to keep him at Blundell Park until the end of the season.

Gianni Paladini, the player's adviser, said last night that there were a lot of hard decisions to be made. "I have spoken to him after the operation on his broken jaw, which was very serious," he said. "Nothing like this has ever happened to him in his many years in football and he is understandably dismayed. At the moment, it doesn't look very good and he will not be able to play for some time."

"I am not sure if he can stay with the club — a lot depends on the reaction of Brian Laws, but he will be released from hospital in the morning and will have talks with the relevant people."



No 704

ACROSS:
1 Secret; a thicket (6)
4 Place surrounded by water (6)
8 Fair; only (4)
9 Larger part of divided group (8)
10 (See-)monster: The — (Hobbes) (9)
13 Animal story with moral (5)
15 (Treasure) dug up (5)
16 Tricky question (5)
18 Official wrong-righter (9)
21 Scattered, occasional (8)
22 A concert: a walk (4)
23 Large (meal); enthusiastic (6)
24 Leg-coverings (6)

DOWN:
1 Wheedle (6)
2 Destroyer of Pompeii (8)
3 Induce (5)
5 Help in tiny, simple steps (9)
6 Very desirous (4)
7 Solid CO₂ (3,3)
11 Spaceman (9)
12 Most powerful nuclear weapon (1-4)
14 Dishonour, stain (8)
16 Violent coup attempt (6)
17 Strong hostile feeling (6)
19 (Eg film) shown full-length (5)

SOLUTION TO TIMES TWO CROSSWORD NO 699
ACROSS: 1 Soft touch 6 Gib 8 Chimera 9 Golani 10 Loan 11 Nogatory 13 Radius 14 Vassal 17 Bequeath 18 Burn 20 Realm 21 Lookout 22 Tie 23 Non-metric
DOWN: 1 Secular 2 Fair and square 3 Twee 4 Uranos 5 Hogmanay 6 Gallows humour 7 Sandy 8 Superman 10 Lunatic 16 Stalin 17 Beret 19 Bol

SOLUTION TO TIMES TWO CROSSWORD NO 699
In association with BRITISH MIDLANDS
ACROSS: 5 Bright lights 8 Stress 9 Yeoman 10 Cure 12 Eclipse 14 Reson 15 Bye 17 Fallen 18 Cavity 20 Death warrant
DOWN: 1 Obstetric race 2 Mire 3 Play-act 4 Ignominy 6 His 7 Transvestite 11 Resolute 13 Unknown 16 Sean 19 Vital
1st PRIZE of a return ticket travelling economy class to anywhere on BRITISH MIDLANDS' domestic or international network is xx xx xx xx
2nd PRIZE of a return ticket to anywhere on BRITISH MIDLANDS' domestic network is xx xx x xx xx
All flights subject to availability.